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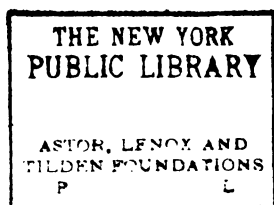


## **FATE AND THE BUTTERFLY**

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H. RICHARD BOEHM

# FATE AND THE BUTTERFLY

BY  
FORREST HALSEY



NEW YORK  
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1909

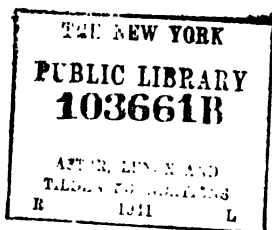
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# FATE AND THE BUTTERFLY

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## CHAPTER I

**W**HAT is the matter, Parker?"

"He says no more motors can go through, madam; they are holding the lines for the bridal carriages," replied the footman.

"But we must go through," insisted his mistress. "Tell him we are guests; show him the cards, Parker."

"Can't help it, lady," protested a policeman, imprinting the mark of a dirty thumb upon the card which conveyed the desire of Mr. and Mrs. William Shelton De Francis for the presence of Mr. and Mrs. James Newland Morris at the wedding of their daughter, Bertha, to Damien Chetwood Roth. "Can't help it," he repeated; "we've got all we can do to hold the lines as it is, and the bride's expected any minit!"

Mrs. Morris gazed in annoyance at the tangle of vehicles and humanity, above which the stalled Fifth Avenue stages rose, platforms of curiosity.

Near by a man on a sightseeing wagon vociferated through a megaphone tidbits of gossip regarding the fashionables who were alighting from carriage and motor at the police-lined awning thrust out into the carpet of human heads.

"He must let us through," the exasperated Mrs. Morris cried. "Jim," to her bored husband, "make him."

Jim exerted himself, but to no purpose. According to the law's representative, there was no way for an entrance through awnings to their friend's wedding. No, not even for such an obvious personage as this lady in pallid gold velvets, ermine and osprey feathers could the lines be broken. "Still," the law suggested, "if the lady would go down the side street and enter by the chantry—some of the late guests were doing so—they had opened the doors."

The lady would. And shortly afterward a waiting reporter's camera snapped Mrs. Morris's foot and leg emerging from her laces as she descended from her limousine. Mrs. Morris's laces came from Paris, but her foot and leg came from a good old "Cracker" grandfather in Georgia; hence some slight incongruity between the aristocratic setting of lace and the short, stout pedal extremity which thrust itself forth to be imprinted on the camera plate for the delectation of ten thousand breakfast tables. In a minute the feet of common clay were



mercifully covered by trailing velvets, and, slender, pretty, and pale, the lady entered the chantry door, followed by her husband.

That they had invaded a robing sanctum was attested through shut doors by sundry squeakings and clerical scufflings, as though vestments were being donned amid a worldly excitement. At the end of the passage a door was opened, and a handsome young priest stood outlined against a dimly lighted interior.

"Oh! Father Marvin," exclaimed Mrs. Morris, "are we frightfully late?"

"No, the bishop has only just come."

"So glad—can't you dine with us? We are at the Plaza for the night."

"So sorry, I have taken a vow to abstain from dinner for a month," and with a smile the young priest retired and closed the door.

"Did you notice, Jimmie?" inquired the lady.

"What, my dear?"

"He was rouged—that's what makes him look so like an angel when he heads the procession. Some one should speak to the bishop."

"He'd better abstain from dinners at Martin's. I saw him there last night . . .," and with a fat-throated chortle the consort of Mrs. Morris opened a door into the main body of the church.

There is a peace and dignity about a great church, even here in the "Church of the Holy



Checkbook." It prevailed above the chatter of crowded pews and the bustle of ushers seating the late arrivals. Stately windows cast amethyst, wine-color and rose on orchid and lily-bank; the high altar was all aquiver with little candle flames and glint of gold vessels. From a far gallery violins, harps and flutes were trilling through the "Flower Song" from "La Bohème."

"I wonder where they got the grey-haired servants in the family pew?" said Mrs. Morris, rising from her genuflection to the high altar, and opening her lorgnette. Her lord seldom deigned a reply to his wife's questions . . . for the good reason that she never listened when he did. Pulling the flesh rolls from under his collar he closed his eyes, until a sweet, shrill voice behind him made him turn to behold Mrs. Rolford.

Mrs. Wellas Rolford's extended course in mankind through the divorce courts of her country made her remember the humanity of the male, even at weddings, where most of her sex consider him impedimenta, indispensable, but of no use.

"My dear," she cried, to Mrs. Morris, "my motor came just after yours. I saw them turn you off."

"How did you get through the line?"

"I smiled at the police captain. It was really no trouble—he was so handsome; and he let me go on."

"I wish I was a policeman," breathed the husband of Mrs. Morris.

"I'm sure you look like one," replied his wife. "Alice, dear, is that the new bishop's wife in the front pew? . . . Next to the woman who looks as though she had the family cat on her neck? . . . The one in the grape cluster toque, I mean."

Mrs. Rolford raised a monocle on a silver prong. "Oh, you mean the fat creature with the pile of purple cannon balls on her head? Yes, that must be his wife. Bishops' wives always look as though their hats were made by deserving parishioners."

"Oh, my dear, we will suffer terribly from that woman. She has on what was once termed a basque. Women in basques always do queer things. One came to stay with me once and had a convulsion. Yes . . . made A B C's with her arms and legs among the chrysanthemums in the glass houses."

"Did the chrysanthemums recover?"

"I don't recall, dear. I think they died . . . or the woman died. It was so long ago. Anyway, I distinctly remember she wore a basque."

"Bessie, look at Ned Crand; he's putting all the friends of the groom on the bride's side. Look! look! he's making old Mrs. Seaworth sit right next to the family pew, and she hates Coralie De Francis like poison. See! she's trying to leave

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and he won't let her! Oh, they never should have permitted him to go to the bachelor dinner."

"But that was two days ago."

"You know Ned. Two days? . . . why, two weeks are nothing! Ah, Jack Whitsey is speaking to him."

"Is Jack an usher?"

"No; just a friend in need," and Mrs. Rolford smiled at a high-colored young fellow who passed with the rescued lady panting on his arm.

"Jack is so good-looking! Pity he has no money," said Mrs. Morris.

"What he lives on is a problem. Do you know, Morty?" inquired Mrs. Rolford.

"Couldn't say, Alice. He's a lawyer, you know. Some lawyers make money. Mine do."

"But not when they devote three-quarters of their time to society."

"Oh, Jack is going to give up all that now," wheezed Morris. "Last night at the club he asked me if I could throw him a bit of the estate."

"Why don't you?" said his wife, scanning the toilettes.

"Too much bother. Bright fellow, though. Pity some one doesn't push him."

"Did you ever hear that he and Bertha were engaged?" inquired Mrs. Rolford.

"No. Don't believe it. Trust Mamma De Francis to squelch anything like that . . .

proud woman she must be. Bridegrooms with eighty thousand a month don't grow on trees."

"And he's such a handsome man!" interjected his wife. "I think Damien Roth is the handsomest man I ever saw."

"I haven't seen him lately, but at Newport last summer they said he was the finest-looking man who had ever been there," returned Mrs. Rolford. "They will make an ideal couple; Bertha is so pretty."

"Here they come," exclaimed Mrs. Morris.

A hurried turning of heads; an excited murmur. But it was only the mother of the bride, sweeping up the aisle in a whirlpool of ushers.

"My dear," said Mrs. Rolford, scanning the fond parent through her monocle, "mamma has certainly kept her figure and she insists on our knowing it."

"A point lace bow and a train always was sufficient for her," replied Mrs. Morris, and gazed through the lorgnette. "Celeste told me she tried to induce her to wear a girdle with it."

"Stunning; but a little too suggestive of our first mamma . . . before the fruit course," grinned Morty.

"Coralie De Francis must feel awfully dressed up in the bath tub . . . all that water, you know." Mrs. Rolford turned her head at an in-

creased murmur from the crowd without. "She's coming!" she exclaimed.

"She's coming!" whispered the packed pews, turning heavy plumage to the open doors and the long tunnel of the awning. A great organ began to roll a majestic welcome to the bride. The high, passionless sweetness of boys' voices came singing from the distant chantry, drawing nearer and nearer, now enriched by the deeper voices of men. A flash of color . . . and the bridesmaids overflowed the church door, awaiting the signal to advance.

From the chantry, with gleam of cross and swinging glitter of censers, came a long procession of white-robed choristers, splashed here and there with the scarlet of acolytes, ending in the shimmering embroidery of the rich robes of prelates. The odor of incense began to prevail above the French perfumes. A cheer from the streets broke through the music.

"The bride! the bride!" rustled the pews, clicking with lorgnettes. Two young men appeared against the chancel rail, and the groom returned a pallid smile to the murmur of his groomsman, whose sardonic monocle heliographed the altar lights as he scanned the church.

"Isn't the bridegroom pale!" murmured the pews. . . . "And so nervous! How he must love her!"

"Hold yourself!" the groomsman murmured, his anxious eyes belying his smiling mouth. "Hold yourself, Damien! Hold yourself, man!"

The bridegroom raised a trembling hand to lips that were slowly turning into a thin, blue scar across his face. "I can't stand it! I can't stand it! Give it to me, for the love of God! You have it? You're not lying to me? You have it? If you are lying . . ." his forehead suddenly glistened with sweat.

" . . . I have it in my hand," said the other, through his set grin. "It's right here. But hold yourself! You won't need it! For her sake, hold yourself!"

"You're sure, you're sure not lying? Let me touch it. All I want to know is that it's there."

The groomsman advanced his clenched hand until Damien Roth's fingers pressed it.

"See! He's anxious about the ring," smiled the pews. "Poor dear! Ah, here comes the bride at last."

The church throbbed with the wedding march, and the bride's procession came up the aisle: first the black-coated ushers; then the bridesmaids, a drifting vision of soft colors, flowers, and bright young eyes; and then, the sweet face of her girlhood like a tea-rose in the snow of her veils, the bride passed to the crowning moment of her life.

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"Whom God hath joined together," said the bishop, "let no man put asunder."

The old words, spoken for so many years before so many altars, seemed to spread out into the church, filling it with the solemnity of the law . . . the sacred law by which man has come up from the brutes. . . . His law . . . "unto them that would be clean."

"Whom God hath joined together," said the bishop.

"I'm glad I gave him that troche; his voice never sounded better," thought the bishop's wife.

"They should change the service," mused Mrs. Rolford. "It is outworn. They said the same thing at my first marriage." She smiled, the picture of the black years in her hard eyes.

The bride was coming down from the altar, and the woman looked at her with the eye of a connoisseur in youth. "She is beautiful," she thought . . . , "and she is going to be more beautiful when someone puts in the background of a little sorrow. I wonder who it will be?"

The procession halted for a moment opposite her pew and the handsome, pallid bridegroom looked into her eyes. Then he bowed to Mrs. Morris and the procession moved on.

"What is the matter, Alice? You look ill," inquired Mrs. Morris, as they joined the throng pouring from the pew.

"Do I?" laughed the other. "Possibly it was the set of the bishop's robe. It was four inches too short in front. Listen to that!" The roar of a mob, punctuated by the smashing of night-sticks, shook the church. "It's getting so we'll have to have the militia in order to get married."

"Oh, they're only making a way for the bride. Did you ever see a girl more lovely?"

"No." Mrs. Rolford adjusted her sables. They had reached the door, and the sides of the awning were in frantic agitation as the crowds struggled and fell against them. The uproar was deafening. Through the opening of the canvas tunnel a stalled motor could be seen, from the steps of which the vociferous, perspiring police were tearing and pitching well-dressed women, who were determined to visually devour the occupants.

"Just like Mamma De Francis to have this marriage in the city. They might just as well have done it at Lawrence," growled Morty.

"Don't criticize her," replied his wife. "She has made an ideal match for Bertha."

"Ideal," said Mrs. Rolford aloud. "I hope that I am mistaken; the girl is too young to lose her sporting chance," said her heart.



## CHAPTER II

**J**ACK WHITSEY stood on the sidewalk watching the daylight fade from a sky of cold primrose drawn over with black lines from the bare boughs of the park trees. Behind him the windows of the De Francis home were yellow in the dusk. At his feet the asphalt was strewn with rice. The sight of the white grains in the dust stabbed him with the thought that she was gone. In all the world there was now no Bertha De Francis. The primrose sky faded to a faint chilly green. The lines of waiting motor and carriage lamps began to mark the avenue with a perspective of glowing discs. The reception had been long; now it and the day were over. His mind retraced the course of that day, all the pageantry and tumult of it, how beautiful she had been as, laughing and blushing, she received the congratulations of the guests. He had tried to give to his well-wishes just the right note, and she . . . there had been a little softness in her manner that told him she had not forgotten, but the light in her happy eyes showed him she would forget. Ah well, he had had a dream from which

the little, white grains in the roadway waked him to tell him she was gone. Never again, while the world ran, would the girl of the old hours smile at him in the flesh. Half unconsciously his lips murmured a line of Lang's:

"In dreams she grows not older."

"Bosh!" He buttoned his coat and began to walk down the avenue.

It was work now; he was done with all this. Clearly he saw how society had robbed him, as literally robbed him as if it had picked his pocket. What had he been doing in the last year? Nothing but enjoying the hospitality his gaiety, youth, and popularity procured for him. That was over, but the blank year was a solid break between college days and the success he had felt so sure of making. It was only a pause, of course, in his onward way, a little frolic on the shore of pleasure before going down to the sea of life. Still, a year is long for a frolic; one's dance steps improve, but the muscles needed for fighting the heavy seas deteriorate. Jack wondered now at the hypnotic effect of the accustomed—often and often he had determined to break away, but it needed the shock of these grains of rice in the roadway to shatter the spell.

How pretty she had been that day he first met

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her! They had come on the same train, and had found themselves alone in the same carriage, bound for the same house party. That ride up the mountain in the sunset had been one of the pleasantest hours of his life. He could still smell the damp sweetness of the woods, and see again the glimpses of cloud-flecked valleys through the trees by the roadside. Night had fallen before they reached their destination, and he had told her of his plans and what he intended to do with his life; also, he had received the sage advice to let nothing turn him from his ambition. And then . . . well, he had turned aside and dreamed for a little while, but now he was awake and it was night and very cold.

"How fast you walk, Jack!" said a voice behind him, and the young groomsman joined him.

"Hello, Loveland!" returned Whitsey. "Your troubles are over."

"Our troubles are never over—there are plenty of women left. Gad, I was glad to get away; those hags and hens make the tower of Babel look like happy days among the mutes."

"They certainly can talk." Where was she now? he wondered. Never would he see her as a girl again—curious thought! that one could go on living, yet never be the same—well, she was happy and he supposed he should be. When would they be back in town?

"You are so talkative," said his companion.

"What is the matter?"

"Why don't you answer my questions?"

"What were they?"

"I asked you if you thought mamma's tears were due to the champagne, or the loss of her daughter; also, how you thought they would like living in London."

"Who are to live in London?"

"Bertha and Damien. He is to take the English end of his father's banking house."

The cold of the night crept into Whitsey's bones. The arc lights, bright and chill, stretched down the lonely avenue. He felt a sudden sense of drifting, as though the world were hurrying about its business, leaving him stranded, watching it in idleness. For it was a woman's business to marry, as it was a man's to work.

"What are you doing, to-night?" asked the groomsman.

"I shall work," returned the other.

"Better dine here with me," indicating the doors of his club. "Then you and I will do some of the hardest kind of work—sit out that new musical comedy."

"No, I am going to read a little law—good-night," and Whitsey walked away.

Every one had a place in life; that man he had just left, even had had his place in the smooth

round of the social machine. But for Whitsey, life seemed suddenly to have become a wall in the pleasant shadow of which he had idled the summer in merry company; now it was winter, shadows were bleak. Also, he was alone.

He entered the pretentious hallway of the apartment hotel in which he had a room. The room was beyond his means, tiny though it was, but the address was a good one to receive letters and impress his tailor. Whitsey's life was spent in other people's houses, so he did not have to reveal the style of his living to his friends. He had not sufficiently penetrated the social Holy of Holies to belong to a good club, and, disdaining those highly colored but socially dim ones of the outer circle, he had none.

Entering his room, he changed mechanically as a matter of course, lit the reading lamp and sat down to the law. But the unaccustomed effort at concentration was painful, and after a while he abandoned it and began to pace the room. He had drunk more than he suspected and it told on him in a heaviness, a feeling of futility. He wondered if it were worth while to bother with books that night. To-morrow he would be fresh—to-morrow, he would begin work in earnest. The sight of the books open under the reading lamp annoyed him, with its suggestion of old college times. He put the books away, turned out the light, and opened

the window. Seating himself on the sill, he blew smoke clouds into the frosty air. Below and away stretched the panorama of the lighted city. From the nearby Plaza, cafés, theatres and hotels glittered with electric signs. Away off on the river a craft whistled. Could that be the English liner?

London—how far it sounded when you said one was to live there!

With a curse he sprang up and banged down the window. It was impossible to stay in this hole; he would take a walk and come back. He felt for his hat and coat in the darkness, not wishing to see the mean little room in the light. After all was said and done, a man without money was no more use than a sick dog; he intended to get it—but first he would cast away all society, all the pleasant rich people who had used him to amuse them and robbed him of his year. He secured his coat and hat, and hurried to the street. The idea of the empty park repelled him. He turned downtown. The cold air cleared his head; he felt calmer, more able to face his problem.

Of course, he would never be able to make money, as these people considered money; still, there were other things that gave distinction, that kept a man's name alive and gave it wings to travel, even as far as London. He did not want to disturb her happiness, he only wanted her to know that he could achieve, move forward with

the rush of life. They had so often talked of his future . . . and she had told him she believed in him and it. He would show her that her belief was not in vain. How pleasant it would be to meet after the years, and, sitting by her fire as they had done in the old hours, to tell her that she had helped him hold fast to his life . . . that his success was due to her, and to the dreams that held her still fair and sweet and young! . . . He would go home now, and in the morning seek out some of the business friends he had drifted away from . . . men who would give his father's son a hand for old sake's sake.

He had reached the corner of Forty-second Street and Seventh Avenue, when his path was barred by a long line of empty carriages returning to their uptown stables from the private entrance of the opera. They flashed by with sheen of veneered panels, shine of lamps, brass and silver. Through the passing windows of the broughams he saw satin-lined interiors, seeming still to hold some note of the exquisite women who had just quitted them. Each of these quickly passing toys represented more than he could hope to save in years, and each was simply the detail of a woman's pleasure. A furious hatred of these evidences of the power and security of wealth came upon him, mingled with a growing feeling of hopelessness and disgust. . . . He had dreamed of fame

. . . to stand in the dignity of achievement amid the luxury with which her husband would surround her. . . . Where would he get it, this intangible fame which would be a passport back into her life?

The tug of the accustomed turned his steps. This wandering the streets got on a man's nerves . . . to-morrow he would see clearer. He entered the opera house.

Framed in the dusk of the vast place, the lighted stage showed him the second act was in progress. The enchanting sweetness of wind tones, the voluptuous euphony of brass harmonies spoke to his tingling nerves, filled him with vague desires. There must be a way . . . some way for a man to achieve . . . money was not everything. . . . His eyes wandered to the dim golden "horse shoe," all punctured with the shaded rosy lights of the boxes; here and there the white flesh of a woman's shoulder was touched by the pink light or sparks smoldered in the darkness as a throat turned in its jeweled collar.

"O heilige Schmach!" came in a wild outburst of manly despair, and the curtain descended.

With the upraising of the lights, the horseshoe was all a chatter and rustle of visiting and receiving.

"So this is the way you work!" said a voice, behind Whitsey.



Jack turned to behold the groomsman.

"Just ran in for a moment," he replied.

"Well, I'm going to run out for a moment, for a drink."

"Shall we go upstairs to the opera club?"

"No; I want to go somewhere where I can't hear the caterwauling. Damn these Wagner nights! Thank God, they're getting fewer and fewer! Come along with me up to the new musical show of Cohan's, up at the New York."

Whitsey nodded and followed him. It was too late to work that night, anyway.

Three hours afterwards they sat in Martin's, watching the clash of the town's kaleidoscope. From end to end the café was packed with night people. Women suggesting the electric signs of the White Way; men suggesting the electric antics of Wall Street. From the balcony the orchestra and the music-machine bawled and blared. The haze of cigarette smoke was full of faces . . . heavy animal faces of fleshy Jews, murmuring through sneering, sensual lips into the ears of fat, slow-eyed, painted women. . . . Horrible, swollen, repulsive creatures in preposterous hats, whose voices shrilled through the din and whose heavy bosoms, fat from the fleshpots, shook with laughter. Here and there old drunken faces, like scarlet masks of abandoned age, leered through the smoke . . . or youth struck a note . . .

some young Jew, beautiful with the beauty that can be of Israel, or a girl with undyed hair and without paint on fresh young cheeks. But for the most part, the scene might have been termed New York, the animal.

"That's one of the things I don't like to see," said the groomsman, nodding toward a corner. "It's growing more frequent because we haven't the courage to take up the cudgels and face it. We are all afraid of the truth in this country, smug hypocrites that we are."

On the opposite side of the room three tables had been shoved together, and were surrounded by elaborately dressed youths who seemed to be in an uproar of mirth. Their leader, whose back was turned toward Whitsey, was evidently intoxicated, and for some reason that fact was giving much joy to the boys, whose clothes were embellished by little details of feminine fripperies. Suddenly the leader sprang to his feet, lurched, and fell with a smash of glass on the table. Instantly he was surrounded by waiters and borne out, protesting violently, followed by his train of youths. Whitsey recognized clerical evening clothes and Father Marvin.

"There is one church in this town that needs a clerical Hercules," said his companion. "It's abominable to see that man and the other smart clergymen here night after night, undoing by their

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presence more in a day than their decent brothers can do in a year. You know and I know what good work the church is doing; but how are the ragtag to judge except by what they see? Some one should expose that church and its crowd."

But Whitsey did not answer. He was drunk.

## CHAPTER III

**D**'AMIEN, do wake up, and tell me what ship that is coming into the harbor."

Roth gave a faint grunt, and, opening his eyes, regarded the white-clad figure of his wife fixedly for a moment, then relapsed into sleep.

Bertha laughed and prodded him with her sunshade. With a growl he turned on his stomach, and slept face downward among his rugs and cushions. The girl, leaning on her sunshade, regarded him with humorous, perplexed severity.

"You might just as well wake up," she began, firmly. "I have read three hundred pages of this stupid novel, and written your letters, and I want to know what that steamer is, and if I have married a somnambulist. Wake up, Damien."

A pause, more deep breaths from the man.

"I've sat down on that stupid balcony watching for you until I almost perished from sheer loneliness, waiting for you, and all the time you were sleeping up here on the roof! Fibber! Monster! Wake up!" More prods of the sunshade. An impatient shake of the sleeper's blond head.

Bertha laughed and seated herself in a lounge-

chair beside him. Reaching out she felt in his pocket, and drew out his cigarette-case, but further search failed to reveal the lighter, so she returned the case, opened a novel, and gave a little yawn. In the half light under the awning, seeming darker for the blaze of the African sun, she looked a fragile thing of dainty, prettily blended tints and tones of youth. The light through the canvas cast faint mauve shadows on the crisp whiteness of her linen, and delicately modeled the girlish purity of her face, accentuating the fresh redness of the mouth and the blackness of the long lashes over her downcast eyes.

Beyond the carpet of roofs the sea sparkled, a band of turquoise against the vast wash of cobalt that was the sky. Violet shadows depended from balconies and lay along the flat roofs from high minarets and cupolas. From the streets came the murmur of crowds, the jingle of camel bells and the unmusical jangle of music from the open cafés; over all lay the smell of Africa, lately discovered of wealth as a setting for honeymoons.

The Roths' moon of honey had refused to melt even in the vigor of the African sun. For three months they had been drifting under the saccharine rays until they anchored here at Mogador, where in a miscalled "villa" they intended staying until the heat forced them to London.

For a girl in her position, Bertha's life had been

very sheltered, owing to the fact that her mother's had not been sheltered at all. It is really a great help to a flirtation to be able to refer to "my poor little daughter for whose sake I endure my outraged and shattered life"—at least, so Mrs. De Frances found it; but when the little daughter gets to be of an age to rival the mother and draw attention to the flight of time, it is better to insist on a little longer seclusion for her. Even if, as all Mrs. De Frances's male friends knew, she had been married as a mere child, still the possession of a daughter of twenty at least implies the fond mother must be a year or two over thirty, and as thirty was the flirtation age of the mother of Bertha, so the daughter's début was very late; to these facts was due her ignorance of life, ignorance which would have been considered disgraceful by a dancing school miss of half her age.

She had been reared in the country, or at schools. Her brief visits to her parents were generally spent in hearing her father and mother quarrel over the length of her dresses and the way her hair was done.

Bertha's father was a nebulous person whose gaping absences from home were finally accounted for by the suits of fair actresses whose brittle feelings his tender handling had so damaged that they were repaired only by the damaging of his bank account. Both parents regarded their daughter as

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a promissory note payable some day at the altar, and, with the feeling that they had deposited the note for payment, they parted with her to Damien Roth.

It is a pretty thing to see the joy of life grow in young eyes, particularly in eyes that have been straining to find it. The old have a certain philosophy to carry them through the hardness of missed chances, they have been alive long enough to know that they were chances only; but for the young there is no such comfort, so when they are barred from the gates they feel as if all the gates in the world were bricked up and would stay so while youth lasted . . . what does youth care for open gates if it must enter agedly on a staff? To Bertha, who heretofore had viewed the world from a pony cart too small for her, the sudden plunge into life, love, and the sun-drenched glory of Egypt was as though she had been caught up into the arms of a god, and with him had risen from the grey of life up into the land of silver cloud linings. Small wonder she looked at her sleeping husband with tender, soft eyes.

He opened his eyes and saw her. "Where have you been?" he demanded.

"Poking you in the ribs," she laughed. . . .  
"Give me a cigarette and your lighter," holding out her hand.

He grasped it with powerful fingers that crushed her flesh. "Don't you lie to me," he snarled; "there was some one here with you." His eyes were bright slits between the puckered lids. She had a sudden fear of him.

"Damien," she cried. "Damien, dear, wake up."

He released her hands, stared dully at her for a moment, then walked hatless into the powerful sun. She jumped up, caught his pith helmet from a table and ran after him. "Here," she cried, "put this on."

The man turned and with an oath walked back, and throwing himself down on the rugs, slept again. She followed and tenderly drew a shawl over the sprawling figure, then softly seated herself. There was in the look the girl fixed on the man a curious, childish question as though there were beginning to persistently intrude itself into her life a thing that she could not understand. Presently the trouble passed from her face, and she smiled. "He is the most curious man when he is waked from sleep," she thought. Smiling, she touched his hair.

The hours passed. Gradually the cobalt sky stained as though a giant tube of crimson had been squirted upon it, then the crimson faded into the hues of lapis lazuli, amethyst shading to green. Night came and the blackness burst with stars. Over the distant roofs lights moved. Suddenly



the long, black finger of a minaret stood out, splitting the white disc of the rising moon; to it the inky roofs turned edges of silver. From the streets came wails of barbaric music as the cafés welcomed the night.

A bare-footed servant hung a lantern to the pole of the awning. The faint light touched the gilt of the sleeper's hair, laid a misty patch on the high brow and lined the strong jaw. The girl watching had a sense of protection in his nearness, a joy in his beauty. Slipping to her knees she put her arm lightly about him, and laid her cheek to his.

Wild screams of singing and laughter came from the streets. The girls of the "Café de Paris" were greeting the night and its trade.

## CHAPTER IV

**M**Y dear Bertha, how nice to see you—go away, I will buy nothing. How is your husband? How long have you been in Cairo? *Ma teruh*, I tell you," cried Mrs. Skimmerhand, addressing Mrs. Damien Roth and three importuning East Indians on the steps of Shepheard's.

Mrs. Skimmerhand, commonly called Sitting Bull, owing to a certain savagery of expression, was a tall, thin woman suggesting a late and bitter autumn clad as a bright and early spring.

Behind her flat and upright back, the Sharia Kamel demonstrated the falsity of the axiom that oil and water will not mix, for on the broad thoroughfare the oil of the East and the torrent of western invasion swept by in one broad flood. Tasseled donkeys with goat-skins horribly swollen with water to suggest the cadaver, camel boys with scarlet sashes, victorias with red-fezzed officials, more victorias with painted ladies from Paris, curious vehicles with white-fezzed Turks, conveying by their head-covering the boycott of Austria,

manufacturer of red fezzes and of trouble for the faithful, all this jumbled in with smart dog-carts and smarter drivers, trotted, rolled or pounded by. Down the steps and along the terrace wall squatted snake charmers shrilly tooting, turbaned magicians slicing up boys, East Indians with piles of merchandise, all the mighty effort of the East for the dollar, franc, or shilling of the West spreading itself along Shepherd's in the brilliancy of the sunshine of Kahira in April.

"How nice to see you," repeated Mrs. Skimmerhand as they seated themselves; "and why haven't I seen you before?"

"We only arrived from Morocco, yesterday. Damien's father is to meet us here."

"But the season is almost over?"

"We are going on to London. We have taken a house in Gay Street."

"I shall see you there," announced Sitting Bull, as though passing a death sentence.

"You will be in London, then?" asked Bertha, timidly propitiatory. The lady before her had an eye before which even the social lions crouched, and it now transfixed the fragile Mrs. Roth.

"Of course, I shall; do you think I will spend another season at Newport?" A snort. "Since the embassies have gone and that monkey cocktail crowd have come, the place is a social Coney Island, a merry-go-round for Sunday supplements of

society," she snorted again, and menaced Bertha with her parasol.

"That is unfortunate," deprecated her rather frightened companion, with vivid memories of maternal summers.

"Unfortunate! It's an outrage! Well, we are to blame for it; I remember when the Vanderbilts first came, being implored to call on them because they knew so few people. I date the degeneration of Newport society, or New York, either, for that matter, to the call Mrs. Astor made on the——" she paused with the well-known Sitting Bull habit of trusting to stares to finish sentences.

Bertha flushed uneasily; she felt somehow responsible for the catastrophe which had overwhelmed society.

"I am going to London," continued the other, "because, if I must be deafened and have my furniture smashed, which is the modern idea of entertaining, I would rather have it done by the daughters of a duchess than by the daughters of my former tradesmen. Are you going to the Khedive's garden party with me?"

"No, I have no invitation," replied Bertha, with a start.

"That makes no difference. come with me," ordered the other.

"But, Mrs. Skimmerhand," replied Bertha in agony, "I am not invited."

"I tell you it makes no difference. I always go whether I am invited or not. I just look at them and they let me in. They said I should see my consul—my consul, indeed! A man who whinnies through his nose when he thinks he speaks the English language—my consul, eh! Come, I want you to meet my daughter, Lady Charteris; she's an awful fool and so is Charteris, but in different ways. She's foolish about him and he is foolish about his children—hasn't got any, you know, that's why he's so foolish about them. Come along."

"Mrs. Skimmerhand, I have an engagement with my husband to drive out to the Pyramids," fibbed Bertha.

"I told Sir Lionel they should pull those things down, then Cairo would get rid of Cook's. What do you see when you do get out there?—stones, nothing but stones—I would as soon go into raptures over quarries at Schenectady. What's the matter with you? You look ill."

Bertha blushed miserably.

"You look unhappy, too."

Two Englishmen and a German gave the girl their undivided attention.

"What's the matter? Husband getting loose from his moorings?"

Two more people closed their books and waited.

"I am well and perfectly happy," said the girl, with a touch of gentle dignity.

"Bound to come," blared Sitting Bull. "Men are all the same kind of fools; can't live with or without us. Well, get a baby as soon as you can; give you something to do, and keep you out of mischief——"

"How do you do, Mrs. Skimmerhand?" said a pleasant English voice, and Esme Hope-Stewart greeted the lady, to Bertha's almost agonized relief.

"I don't think you and this girl should meet," announced the female, after the introductions were over. "Awful blackguard, my dear; one foot in the bankruptcy, the other in the divorce court. Still, I am not responsible for the people I know."

Esme Hope-Stewart seated himself and thanked his stars for a pretty face on a dull afternoon. Esme Hope-Stewart was one of the hyphenated gentlemen to be found on the note-giving borders of the aristocracy who find Americans in London profitable, and whom Americans find expensive, but worth the price. Mrs. Skimmerhand's manner to him implied her independence of such purchased articles.

Despite the social accomplishments of the new member of the group, Mrs. Roth's mind obviously was oblivious to them. The man found himself

at loss to classify her. Esme's taste for women really reached the height of a talent, and had developed in him a sixth sense which told him at first contact with one how far he could eventually go; but with Mrs. Roth all the thousand little tentacles reaching out from his educated animalism found nothing to grasp. He had the feeling that as far as this woman was concerned, Esme the man did not exist, and he smiled, delighted to find that to be the case; it would be a new sensation to prove to her that he did.

Bertha's eyes followed a cart that slowly made its way through the crowd; a ramshackle thing of carved wood drawn by a languid bullock. In it were three figures, two veiled women with stolid animal eyes, and a jaunty little Turk who smirked at the passing females. Was it the lot of women, the world over, to have their existence only for a man's pleasure? wondered the girl, and why, with all these people she knew about her, was it impossible to find one to whom she could appeal for advice in this thing that had come into her life? Were all men the same? She looked at the tanned, blond lounge before her. One of Esme's little tentacles telegraphed.

"I appeal from that to Mrs. Roth," he said.

"I am afraid that I was not listening."

"Mrs. Skimmerhand does not agree with me,

that for all practical purposes your sex wields less influence now than at any time in its history."

"Rot," cried Sitting Bull. "Look at Mrs. Eddy; if there was a man alive who had her influence, we would be all pushed off the face of the earth, he'd be so swollen with egotism. No, we are getting stronger and you're so frightened you try to belittle us."

"What does Mrs. Roth say?" asked Esme. One of his favorite plays was called "Ruffling the Quarry," and in this there is nothing so efficacious as an attack on what the quarry is pleased to consider its hunting abilities.

"I really could not say," said Bertha, and relapsed into reverie. What was to be done? Since that time on the roof at Mogador the thing had thrust itself into her life again and again, each time more dreadfully . . . it was waiting for her now, upstairs behind the doors of her husband's room, which had been locked all day. Her hands trembled on the chair arms. She was glad of the company of even this terrible old woman and the tired-faced man. She dreaded to be alone, to think of the time when she must go to those locked rooms. Above all, she dreaded the night.

"I am sure Mrs. Roth will come, if you ask her," the Englishman said.

"Mrs. Roth is going with her husband, to see the Pyramids," replied Sitting Bull, getting up.



She was not above doing a good turn to the girl, and her manner implied a surrender of her to the Pyramids and her husband.

"Let us beg Mrs. Roth to break her engagement with the Pyramids. I think they will be there tomorrow, but the Marchesa will have flown."

"Where are you going?" asked Bertha. She would not be left alone to watch the light sink into the greyness which presaged night.

"To the Marchesa di la Mirandola's apartments for bridge. Pray, come! The Pyramids are very kind about broken engagements."

"I will be very glad," said Bertha Roth. What did she care if the old woman looked at her queerly? That the man was flattered? Night was coming.

The Marchesa proved to be a little woman with shrugging shoulders, painted eyes, and tinted friends. Bertha was slightly alarmed at the over-emphasis of eyes, gowns, and conversation, but also in a mood which had no desire to be critical, and the guests of the Marchesa having seen her arrival chronicled in *The Sphinx* and heard her discussed as one of the abnormally rich of even her rich country, softened their manner to her in deference to her youth.

Mrs. De Frances had done her duty by her daughter. The same bridge instructor who perfected the friends of her mother in the delicate

art of professional gambling taught the daughter. When Bertha rose from the table the gold in her hands was an inconvenience; seeing this, the kind Marchesa offered to replace it with her check. Bertha gladly agreed and was relieved of the inconvenience, also of her winnings, as subsequently the check was dishonored.

Her new friends prevailed upon her to dine with them, as they did not wish to abandon the game long enough to make evening toilettes. Upon a balcony of the apartment overlooking the moonlit tropical exuberance of the gardens, the table was set. Here in the candle light, with the fragrance of dew-wet carnations, roses and jasmine rising from the shadows of the eucalyptus and palm trees, they dined, compared the score cards, then hurried in to the electric light and bridge.

Declining all urging to resume the game, Bertha remained on the balcony. The scarlet-fezzed and coated servants of the hotel passed softly behind her, removing the table. From the rooms came the sound of murmured voices and chink of glasses; across the feathery palms and shadowy acacias three windows whitely took the moonlight—her husband's rooms. She had a forlorn sense of hopelessness, of being alone.

Esme took a chair beside her. "How perfect the night is," he said.

She turned to him; in the pale light she looked

very young and wistful. He noticed that her eyes were like those of a weary child he had once seen resting against an abutment of the Pont Alexandre in the hard-cut electric light, a child who had lost its way forever in the Paris streets.

"It is very cold," said Bertha Roth.

"Cold?" he mocked gently. "Dear lady, this is Egypt in April; but if you like, we will go in."

"No, if you please, I prefer to stay here. Is it late?"

"Rather, the time goes so with bridge."

She shivered. She was alone, and it was night. Across the palms the pale windows looked at her. A long-legged bird moved grotesquely from behind a kiosk across the gravel path, and splashed into the fountain. How strange this place in which she found herself! Yet in all the world there was nowhere else that she could find a shelter. Was her experience the common lot of women? Was it always like this?

Esme's eyes, under their lowered lids, saw the fingers clench the arm of the chair, the tremble of the drooping mouth.

"The moonlight is the light for home thoughts, Mrs. Roth. I presume you are thinking of home?" Was that the right note? Or should he strike the higher chords of direct sympathy on this delicate instrument upon which he had begun to play, an unhappy woman.


"I don't like the moonlight, it is so cold," she answered. She was absolutely alone; in all the world there was no one who cared what the life of Bertha Roth might hold. If only old Maggie were alive! Her heart made a clutch after the dead nurse.

"Mrs. Roth"—the man did not look at her; these things should never be done with too much emphasis—"forgive me, but I cannot help feeling you are unhappy—that you suffer. You are such a child! I am so old and unfortunately wise in the price you women pay for all things, that you will let me tell you that I can see—sometimes to have a friend who sees, makes us feel less lonely—I know; I, too, have suffered."

He really did it very well. His art was perfect enough to be subtly personal, yet candidly impersonal, to conceal itself while revealing him. He did not raise his eyes from the shadowy palm trees below the balcony.

Across the garden, three windows showed ghastly in the pale light.

"I must go now; good-night," she said, and rose. Her voice was quiet, but Esme detected a little catch in it; his ear was attuned to catches.



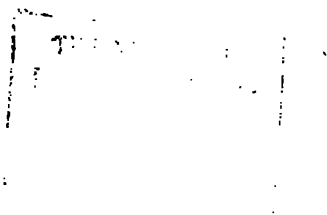
## CHAPTER V

**B**ERTHA opened her bedroom door and, one hand still clutching its knob, listened. Her pose suggested not one who would retreat, but one whose way of flight had been cut off. For some minutes she remained motionless, peering into the obscurity. Gradually the wide, cool darkness filled with the shapes of familiar luxury, the Turkish canopy of the bed formed above its screens, the mirror at the dressing table showed a sheen of glass—nothing but accustomed things; yet she waited, the door handle wet from her shaking hand. With a clutch at her resolution she hurried across the floor and turned up the bed lamp.

The glow through the shading silk struck upward, throwing fantastic shadows on her pale beauty, and glittered in her haggard eyes which fixed themselves upon a door in the far wall. She had disrobed in her dressing-room, and her hair, tumbled against the white nightdress, resembled streams of bronze in the yellow light. She drew back the bed coverings with little pauses of move-



“Her hand reached for the night lamp and turned it down.”




ment in which her whole body seemed straining to listen. A faint noise came from the far room. Her hand reached for the night light and turned it down. The room sank into obscurity filled with the ghosts of furniture. The vast toilet table winked with little glints from the multiplicity of its gold fittings, as though these settings of an ideal marriage were endowed with malicious eyes and saw and enjoyed a jest known only to themselves.

In the other room something laughed. Her hand gripped the staff of the lamp; the light shone on the white knuckles and the nails pressed bloodless. Her lips moved; a faint whisper came from them as if a set phrase were mechanically, yet passionately repeated. At last she crept into bed, and lay with her eyes fixed on the door in the far wall.

A breeze blew the odors of jasmine and roses into the room, and gradually it grew fragrant with the perfumes of a cool, flower-scented night. Beyond the bed screens the tops of the windows showed white squares of a moon-showered world. With the silence came a sense of peace from a world at rest. She slept.

His clutch at her throat waked her, and she stared upward at the awful terror that was in his eyes; black holes in the bloodshot whites, they glared down from the yellow, seamed mask of his face; from the blue lips over the twitching chin a thin, glutinous veil of saliva hung glistening in the





lamplight. His hands sank with a horrible sensual joy into the soft flesh of her neck.

"Damien," she said, with pitiful accustomed quietness. "Damien, dear." She lay motionless in his grasp. There are some fears that pass feeling, so she lay quietly, wondering if this thing that came of nights to possess the man she loved would kill her.

"Who was in the room with you, just now?" softly snarled the blue lips. "Who was it? Who? Answer me!"

"No one has been here; you are dreaming again," she said, and she waited for the thing to kill her.

The hands loosed; he sank to his knees. She heard him crawling, laughing, the opening of wardrobe doors, the rip and tear as he destroyed a dressing gown that he had crawled across, then the soft dragging into the other room . . . and the door was shut.

She sat up; the coverings of her bosom rose and fell as though the heart within were bursting through. A faint clicking came to her ears. She made no sound, but dazedly raised her arms, mechanically pushed back her hair from her forehead, then clinched her hands in the coils, twisted over, and lay on her face, gasping.

The door slowly opened. The sound of crawl-

ing came over the floor. Suddenly the bestial horror upreared beside the bed and cast itself upon her, burying its slime-covered lips in her hair with a kiss.

## CHAPTER VI

**T**O Esme Hope-Stewart the opening of the lift door which revealed Lady Charteris closed another door upon the hope of meeting Mrs. Roth, a hope which had caused him to linger the morning away amid the turgescency of Shepherd's entrance hall. His esthetic sense had been outraged, and now as Lady Charteris advanced, with the smile of protesting accustomedness called to the faces of some women by the sight of the uncontrollable devotion of all men who come in contact with them, Esme's temper was also damaged.

Lady Charteris was the type of woman who cannot be trusted with emphasis, the kind that if a man says to her: "In this matter of the neck-scarf you are making for me, I trust your taste in silk, absolutely," his next call finds the lights and her voice softened, and later she says, with a thrill in the words . . . "You said you trusted me, absolutely."

In person, Lady Charteris was a little inclined

to flesh, and also to resemble a doll, made by a good hand, but given to an apprentice to color.

"Esme," she said, "how did you learn I was here? Did they tell you at the Chezireh? How nice of you to follow me." She did not believe he had followed her, but her eyes begged him to say that he had. Her smile was gone now, slinking away before the hard boredom that filmed his glance at her. He was a master of the unspoken word that plunges deeper than the direct cut of the spoken insult. The man who makes a business of women turns the very weapons which they can use against them. And he does it with the surety that comes from a long practice of watching the implements manipulated by their fair owners.

"No, I did not follow you; I told you I would not see you until you could behave more like a woman and less like a watering pot."

"But, dear, I have been ill. I wrote you every day, and you never answered. I've had to undergo a terrible operation. Yes," in answer to his ejaculation of surprise . . . "a fearful one on the bones and nerves of my head . . . and you never answered my letters . . . all the agony and danger, and you never answered one of them. . . . What would you have done if I had died, Esme?"

Lady Charteris's tooth had been filled, but

women love to make the trump spades when hearts prove weak.

The man murmured something conventional. The lady was fond of the feminine method of keeping affection and punishing neglect, which consists in insisting their victim shall witness a rehearsal of past agonies.

Esme's cane traced a pattern of the mosaic. He was weighing a note which was coming due against the continued acquaintance of Lady Charteris.

In every woman's mind there is a drawer marked with a man's name, and in that drawer a card system. Each card is labeled, "Things you have made me suffer," and in the presence of the man the impulse to open the receptacle and run over the cards is one that only a clever woman can resist. Lady Charteris was not a clever woman, and she was now passing from card to card with the remorseless persistency of the stupid.

"Now," she concluded, "I suppose you will make some excuse not to come to my dinner to-night."

"Don't be a rotter, Charlotte. Why should I go? For the pleasure of talking to Arthur?"

"If you read my letters you would know my husband is in Khartoum."

"There will be other guests?"

"They go early; there will be no bridge. Dear,

please come; I have engaged 'Ismail,' fortune-teller to the Princess Nimat-Allah, the Khedive's sister; he is said to be wonderful. I want him to read your fortune. Then, besides, there will only be a few besides ourselves."

The lift was coming down again, and any moment Mrs. Roth might emerge from it . . . besides, the note must be taken care of.

"I will come," said the man.

A rather pathetic gladness shone from her doll-like eyes.

Lady Charteris came from a land the fathers of which have buried their heads so deep in their ledgers that they have no time to glance up and see what their women folk are doing. And the mothers are firmly convinced that as they were able to take care of themselves in a simpler generation, their daughters are able to do the same in a more complex one. In the idyllic land from which Lady Charteris came, a girl was supposed to learn all she needed to know of sex on her wedding night, and as marriages are supposed to be made in heaven, the parents felt no responsibility beyond seeing that there was compatibility of bank accounts. With her marriage into, and the arrival amid, an older civilization, one which recognizes the fact that sex does not begin at the altar, Lady Charteris began one of those far from innocent,

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## 48 FATE AND THE BUTTERFLY

but also far from physically wicked, flirtations upon which her vanity had formerly fed, and awoke in horror to find Fisme, who was one with his civilization in his knowledge of sex.

"Remember, no excuses," said the lady, as she signaled her sâis. "And I wan't you to be nice to a young friend of mine, a Mrs. Roth."

"Did you say that she will be there?"

"Do you know her?"

"I am not sure; I rather think I may have met her."

"Quite a pretty, pale young girl—goes everywhere without her husband; all Cairo talks about it—still, they are very rich, and you must promise to be nice to her, do you hear?" she smiled at him as they descended to her carriage.

He stood watching her victoria in fierce struggle with a Cook's break for the privilege of bursting through a funeral procession and thought that he had come very near being a fool. Nothing is more silly than to quarrel with a woman with money, unless it be about a woman with more.

As he turned to go, a station wagon of the hotel drove up to the steps, and in a clamor of porters an old gentleman got out. The man's face impressed Fisme as familiar, and his manner plainly indicated importance as he strode up the steps, followed by a footman, secretary, and valet.

"That is Roth, the great American banker," said a voice behind Esme.

"Fine old man," said another, with a nasal twang. "The Street always turns to him when it is in trouble. Gad, his is a name to be proud of."





## CHAPTER VII

**D**INNER was over. In the apartments of Lady Charteris in the Ghezireh, a subdued expectation prevailed over the languor of the fed. Servants were removing the candelabra from among the flowers. Shade by shade as the stands disappeared the room darkened, its windows became prominent, blue with moonlight and crossed by the broad silver of the languid Nile.

"You must all be very quiet," said the hostess, as the last candles were taken out . . . "and don't chaff him, remember."

A woman laughed. At the windows a servant drew the curtains, blotting out the moonlight and the Nile. The absolute darkness rustled with laughter and whispering. A door opened and waiters entered, bearing trays of flaming liquors; before each guest they placed one of the small, dancing lights. The room took on a hobgoblin kind of illumination. As the violet flames steadied, out of the darkness nebulous white shoulders, shirt fronts, and quaintly shadowed faces swam and


formed until the table ringed as with the ghosts of the people who had dined so gaily, each attended by its flickering corpse-light.

"Let them burn," said Lady Charteris . . .  
"as long as they burn, he will stay. . . .  
When he points at you, rise and ask him what he sees. He speaks French." She gave a nervous start as at her elbow a white-draped figure appeared.

The violet lights shone upward upon the glittering eyes, thin sensual lips and hooked nose of an Arab. His appearance had been so stealthy, his aspect so strange, so cruel in the weird light that he seemed to menace the strangers, the unbelievers who dared to hold revel here by the father of mysteries, the sacred Nile. He stood statue-like, the alcohol lights glittering in his eyes and sending waves of color over the white fall of his draperies, while above the little points of violet fire dim, pale faces gazed at him in silence. From the terrace the toot of the hotel's launch pierced the drawn curtains.

"So glad you came," said Lady Charteris, clearing her throat. "I hope you will do as well for us as you did at M. de la Bouliniere's dinner."

The Arab said nothing. Esme noted as the man's eyes passed slowly from face to face a mental combat; here the glance would rest and the eyes of a woman would distend and grow frightened,



there as it paused a man would glower with an unconscious outshoot of the jaw. At last the Arab raised his arm and pointed, and the Englishman saw Bertha Roth rise and stand confronting the white-clad figure.

She was dressed in black satin which, save for a sheen here and there, mingled with the blackness of the room. Curiously lighted from below her face, neck, and arms stood out vivid white against the darkness. The deep shadows below them emphasized the wide mournful eyes, above which the eyebrows curved thin, black against the pallor of her forehead set in its piled masses of hair, all of red coppery lights and smoldering auburn browns. Across her satin-covered bosom a line of great diamonds spat and scintillated color with the rise of her breath.

"What do you see for me, Ismail?" she asked.

The man folded his arms, closed his eyes, and spoke, saying:

"I see a butterfly in a garden . . . from flower to flower flits the butterfly . . . from flower to flower it flits, but the flowers are withered, the garden is dead . . . there is no place for the butterfly."

The diamonds on her breast rippled with iridescent fire.

"I see," the medium continued, "leaves whirling . . . and now I hear a wind . . . a

great wind, and in that wind I see the butterfly . . . now I hear the roar of a vast sea." He paused.

Esme was surprised to see the girl's lips form into a slight smile.

"Why do you pause?" she inquired.

The Arab unfolded his arms, and spread them wide as he said:

"I have finished."

"Surely, you can see what becomes of the butterfly?"

"I hear the wind . . . I see the waves . . . I cannot see the butterfly."


She laughed and seated herself. From the dim faces came a murmur of protest and reassurance. The Arab pointed again, and soon the circle was absorbed in another reading.

"It is so hot; will you go to the garden? This will last some time," said Esme's voice in Bertha's ear.

She nodded gratefully. The room was close and filled with the pungency of burnt liquor.

"Oh, how lovely," cried Bertha, at the sight of the gardens of Ghezireh under the moon. Through the pale light all the flowery, plummy, statue-set beauty, the pride of the luckless Khedive, faithlessly beckoned their alien feet.

"Shall we walk?" asked the Englishman; "the night is ripping."



They descended the steps, and entered a path leading to the lake. Her lithe, girlish figure was splashed all over with moonlight which glistened on clinging satin and ran fiery through the great diamonds, then the overhanging foliage mosaiced her with shadows and she moved in their dimness like some spirit of the garden against the dark tangle of roses, flowering cactus, and dim, scarlet poppies.

Her beauty had not matured into the brilliancy which later made it famous, in fact it was marred by a thinning, an accentuation of line, and a haggard wistfulness strange to see in combination with such freshness of youth; but to her companion even this had its appeal of the unusual to senses accustomed to the expected in women.


The Arab's simile had caught the man's fancy, and to-night he recalled days in the long ago when, net in hand, he stalked butterflies through Surrey lanes.

The gossip of Cairo was busy with the Roths, and none of it escaped the Englishman. He knew that the husband never went about with the wife, but lolled the days away behind closed shutters, or sallied out after dark to the native town, while the wife faced Cairo's conjectures with an outward calm which bespoke to his trained mind a social heredity for which he had never heretofore given her countrywomen credit. The practical sense

of the woman-hunter also told him that under the girl's quiet, even whimsical manner lay depths of rebellion and unhappiness into which the carefully careless casts of the plumb line of his unexpressed sympathy sank. In much comfort of mind he therefore directed their steps into the solitude of the garden, through half-closed eyes noting the long beauty of her naked arm, the slender fingers grasping the folds of her train, how the black line of her gown cut across the live, young flesh of her small, firm breasts. Yes, it was a pretty butterfly, quite worthy of a pin and a place in the collection of his life.

Her innocence did not bar her from an instinctive knowledge of the type of man beside her, yet he had played his hand so well, and expressed his sympathy by such delicate shades of understanding she had half come to trust him, at least she did not fear him, and he made her forget, helped her through the empty days.

Bertha's air-castles had long since fallen, and the land of silver cloud linings was a memory. She had not ceased to dread the nights, but to no one who lives perpetually with horror does it retain its terrors. Bertha's love for her husband, founded in gratitude, was dead, or she thought so, but she was no longer afraid, only weary with a desperate weariness of disgust, disgust which included herself with him; but to the discovered horror of



being a woman to such a man as her husband, she was becoming accustomed. After all, what could she do? The law does not enter between man and wife and say you shall not pollute this woman's soul, and the law is right in naturally concluding that parents will guard their children.

In the land from which Mrs. Roth came, parents were too busy to bring up their children; as for guarding them, the offspring had long since taken that matter into their own hands. This is not quite just to Bertha's mother, who, though she made every effort to prevent Bertha's advent into life, had also made every exertion to marry her properly. Had there been the slightest whisper about the financial stability of her future son-in-law, the mother would have investigated it strictly; the numerous whispers regarding his moral character were, of course, no affair of hers. Does not marriage change the roué's spots and wash him whiter than snow?

"Let us sit here," said Esme, pointing to a marble bench.

Bertha seated herself. Between the boles of the palm trees the lake rippled in the moonlight, above the foliage of its far bank the dome of a summer house rose like a bubble of silver.

"How pretty!" said she; "poor Ismail Pasha!"

"He should be delighted that ~~what~~ what he created

finds favor in the eyes of Mrs. Roth," Esme answered.

"But it seems so tawdry to turn his pleasure house into a hotel."

"I wonder how long it will be before all palaces are turned into hotels?"

"Presumably when all the money is so divided that no one has enough to pay their bills;" her smile belied the sadness of her eyes.


"Then I hope to live to see it. I would enjoy a world that could not pay its bills . . . I should get on in that kind of a world."

"Surely we did not come into the gardens to discuss bills!" she said. The little sprite that walks by night with the feminine told her that, though her life was a ruin, both the garden and the moon were not there to be wasted.

"I hate bills and their discussion; they are out of place in a fairy land with an enchanted princess," he said.

"An enchanted princess . . . Oh, how stupid of me! Yes, I see. Do you always say just the right thing, Mr. Hope-Stewart?"

"I wish that I could say just the right thing tonight . . . the thing that would show how much of a friend I am to you . . . how much of a friend I could be if you would just turn to me a little in your trouble." He bent for-





ward and allowed his glance to caress her slender body; the close-fitting satin had twisted about it, revealing its young Dryad curves. Her arms lay along the back of the seat in warm, round contrast to the lifeless marble. The moon, her beauty, and the night all attacked the calculating Esme. His heart began a beat that must even have surprised that much-worn organ. He drew closer, and one hand closed over hers.

"Bertha!" he whispered; "Bertha!"

She did not draw away or resist him. Her eyes continued to stare at the silver bubble of the summer house. She had no feeling but that night had come again, and with it the loathly things of darkness, and that here between her and it was a man who felt for her, and could give her what her hungry heart cried out for, with all the passion of the feminine thing it was, sympathy, understanding; here was some one who knew. She had only the capital of her heredity to draw on for protection in the bankruptcy of her marriage, and her mother had kept no deposits there against a time of moral stringency. Her eyes grew soft, tears glistened on their lashes.

"Dear butterfly," he said, and crushed her to him with a kiss.

She struggled, sprang up and tore herself loose from his arms, then with one arm out to protect

herself from him, a hand covering her face, she stood trembling.

He smiled. How easy it was to follow a woman through all the steps of a passion. Waiting for a space, he came nearer to her and tried to take her hand.

She shrank away shuddering, her arms wrapped tight about her in fear of his touch.

"Go away!" she said. "If you touch me I will call for help! Avoid a scandal . . . go away."


"But love," he plead, bewildered. This was foreign to his experience, this quivering, shrinking woman, who the moment before had invited him by her passivity. He advanced, his arms spread, but something in the sick repugnance of her eyes made him stop.

She shook with physical loathing, huddling away from his nearness, pressing her body against the side of the marble bench.

"I am to blame for this," she said in a dreary voice. "I let you go on; forgive me, but please . . . please . . . leave me."

"Bertha!" he exclaimed in angry astonishment. Had he confronted a mental state he would have been at ease, but this woman shrank from him as from an animal diseased.

"Can't you understand?" she said; "he, my husband, has made me loathe all of you . . ."



your kiss made me see that . . . your eyes . . . See me to the hotel." She began to walk rapidly up the path.

He followed her. For once in a long life, Esme Hope-Stewart was unable to say a word to a woman who repulsed him. Later as he put her in her carriage, he said, "May I see you to-morrow?"

"I am leaving Cairo," she answered.

He watched the lamps of her carriage go down the avenue toward the bridge. The butterfly was gone then—was he getting too old to catch butterflies?—after all it was a long time ago, to the Surrey lanes. The first chill wind from the bleak stretches of age pierced the warm self-complacency of Esme Hope-Stewart. After all, he was better suited for the capture of goldbugs than butterflies. He returned to Lady Charteris.

Bertha Roth cowered in a corner of her carriage, counting the moments between her husband and herself with the reborn horror of the physical which had sprung to life at Esme's kiss. Her flesh quivered; a nausea oppressed her as she felt in memory the touch of his lips, and saw again his eyes so like her husband's. Her husband . . . her marriage . . . why should she bear with either, since both were destroying her? She smiled with the first touch of coming hardness in her eyes as she recognized the old sophistry of the unhappy woman. Well, she must bear it, some-

how. All her training and heredity shrank from scandal . . .

A block of the traffic on the Kasr-el-Nil stopped her carriage; mechanically, she glanced from the window to note the cause. A pair of eyes, hard, sensual, eastern eyes, appraised her as though she were an animal for sale. It was merely a soldier of the life-guard scanning "the bare necks" on their return from the Casino, but the man's glance shattered Bertha's courage.

The stone lions, which meant Cairo, showed through the window. Picking up the tube, she directed the coachman to return to the Ghezireh, where she engaged rooms and telephoned to Shepherd's for her maid. Also she forbade her door to her husband.

## CHAPTER VIII

ONE may forbid the door to one's husband, but it is hard to forbid it to the conventions; when one has lived long with them they will not take denial, but enter in, sit down, and make the unwilling host see all the consequences of defying them.

The class from which Bertha sprang might break the commandments, but to shatter the conventions was a much more serious matter. The little laws which society has made to defend its comfort, assert themselves powerfully when broken. Like walls, they serve to keep safe those within them; but, once cast outside their protection, one can dash against them in vain. They are the ramparts which permit no return to their pleasant shelter.

Some thoughts of this kind were in Bertha's mind as she looked at her immaculate father-in-law. From the pearl in his scarf to the tip of his white kid boot, he personified the law, the class, and the calm authority she had chosen to defy. It was with a little quickened beat of the heart that

she received him the afternoon after leaving her husband.

Mr. Roth was a hereditary financier of the new type, who manipulate a monocle with one hand and the market with the other; just at present both hands were needed for the manipulation of a daughter-in-law, and although it was not perceptible in the cool urbanity of his manner, Mr. Roth was experiencing more difficulty than he had looked for with his son's wife. This white, fragile thing of his son's pleasure still had in her keeping the name of Roth, that name which had stood unblemished for generations in a land where changes even of moral viewpoint are rapid and insidious.


"My dear Bertha," he said, in conclusion of the interview, "how is it possible for me to understand this matter, unless you take me into your confidence? Why have you left your husband?"

"I refuse to answer you, or discuss the matter with you . . . as you say it lies between my husband and myself. Not even to you can I say more than that my resolution to leave your son is unalterable." She tried to keep her voice steady as she spoke, but was swallowing nervously while her wet hands pleated and repleated a fold of her dress.

"But, my child, this is ridiculous."

"I refer you to your son."

"I have seen him; he is not at all well—this



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matter has prostrated him. I understand that he has been ill ever since he came to Cairo. When men are ill, things otherwise impossible will occur," glancing at her, curiously. The ice was very thin and a break in it meant that all the black depths would be open to the public eye.

"Surely, you will put a stop to this scandal, and return with me?" he added.

"I will not return with you, neither will I give you my reasons for leaving him." She turned her head to the window; the light showed the hollows under her eyes, the thin line of her neck.

"Bertha," he said more gently; "child, you must tell me. I stand here in the place of your father. I never had a daughter, but if I had, I should want a man near her in her trouble who would feel toward her as I feel to you. Tell me, why are you leaving my son? You will find that what they say of me is true; I am just." He had not intended to speak to her in that manner; he had come there with the fixed resolve to use all his great power to break the girl to his will, but something in her quiet, tremulous dignity touched the heart in which had hidden a fear and a knowledge of his only son.

Tears came into her eyes. It was hard to be alone, not to know what to do. Last night she had been sure with all the sureness of disgust; to-day in her lonely rooms, without a friend, and with

every sense in acute, terrified anticipation of the results which her decision would precipitate, she was losing her resolution. Still, she could not . . . would not go back . . . never . . . never.


"You are kind," she said aloud. "If I could, I would tell you, but the matter lies between myself and my husband."

He was grateful to her. He had braced himself for words that would sear his pride like irons; that would strip his son as for the lash, before his old eyes. But his son's wife, though she had abandoned her husband, kept his dignity with her own. How fine a thing this pride of silence; how worthy of the traditions of the women of his name. Yet there must be no scandal, even the unspoken one of a rupture.

"My dear," he said, "I will be frank with you. I know more than you think, and what I do not know I can guess . . . I am his father."

She made no answer; her fingers pleated and repleated the fold of her dress. The music of a band came through the windows from the terrace where the tea-takers were gathering.

"There is another side of this matter," he continued, "I wonder if you have thought of it. Bertha, this world is merciless to its cowards—it is their hell—therefore, I ask you, who are not a coward, to return to the man you married."





"I cannot . . . I, too, am a coward."

"You are not. You are a brave woman, and you are his one hope. If you go away, he is lost."

"I cannot . . . please, please leave me; I cannot return."

"He loves you."

She shuddered.

"He loves you. If you could see him now, you would pity him."

"I will not go back."

"He thinks that you have gone for good. If you do not come back——" he spread his hands with the gesture of one who pleads not too passionately and with due regard for the decorum of the court. "He is in hell, and a coward."

She looked wearily at a rose spray that hung across her window. She saw him as he lay in that darkened room. She saw the black shades which crouched with him whispering into the ears which the futile hands strove to close; saw all the agony, all the mocking shame which pageanted before the wide, hopeless eyes of the man she had married; the man who had come to the door of her empty life bringing love with him. Love was dead, yet he had been with her, and love's empty chair you cannot take from the table while the feast to which he has brought you is yet spread.

The father bent forward, and laid his hand on the arm of her chair as he continued:

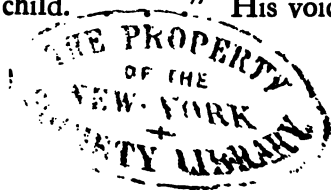
"My dear, no man had more promise in his young years." It occurred to him how young his son really was even now.

"Yes," he continued, "he had promise then. He was all that a man could hope for; he was as I had prayed God to make him, clean, modest, manly. Then a woman came, as they always come, I suppose. She was a creature of the kind that is bred in the filth of great cities by the scum of outworn races, and was just at the point of the years when a woman begins to look down the slope and see the end . . . another year or two and she would have been harmless;" his fist clenched. "A little while more and she would have been ruddled trash for the bagnio, but she still had a serviceable bit of looks—and she got the boy.

"He was young, fresh, rich; quite a find, I assure you. She took him, corrupted him to his very bones, plundered, tired of him, and left him, but before she did so she taught him to use the drug. . . ."

"And there he will be forever, unless you, the one decent thing in his life, the one pure woman of his life, save him. I don't know if you can save him—I sometimes think God himself could not; but you might try. . . . Your life will be empty enough, my poor child. . . ."

His voice took



on an impersonal note as though he had almost abandoned the attempt to convince her, in a sudden conviction of its futility.

She made him no answer. Her hands lay idly in her lap as though the pleading had wearied them.

He laughed a hard little laugh. "Bertha, child," he said in response to her look, "it occurs to me that as that woman ruined him, she might just as well have the full credit of her handiwork. . . . Why should any other woman bother to save the few remains that she has left?"

"Don't," said Bertha Roth. "She shall not ruin him altogether. I will go back and help him fight. Oh, why didn't he tell me . . . why didn't he tell me?"

The father took her hand and kissed it.

"You are a brave child," he said.

"I am his wife," said the girl.

## CHAPTER IX

**T**HE late English twilight struggled with the numerous lamps which, one by one, glowed under the footman's touch.

The guest felt that he was very early, and with an added quickness of the heart wondered if he would see her alone. The servant opened the glass doors to the terrace. A smell of the garden entered with the tinkle of the passing hansom bells of London. The man moved about the terrace, giving a touch to the unlit lamps, or to the wicker chairs and tables which later would be devoted to the bridge of Mrs. Damien Roth's guests at her last dinner party before her departure for America.


The guest watched the man's movements as he passed and repassed the wide doors. The hope that he would see his hostess alone made him nervously conscious of the servant's presence. Leonard Seaforth was an American of the type that cannot accept servants as automata. With a last touch to the tables the footman withdrew, and the guest sighed in relief.

In the light of the yellow-shaded lamps the

drawing-room stretched away from him in a long vista of pale primrose satin walls, against which heavy columns of saffron marble stood in massive relief. At the far end of the room an immense yellow-marble fireplace towered; in its chimney-breast was set a portrait of Mrs. Roth by Shannon. The painting showed a young girl in white against a background of sunny leaves, and had been painted before her marriage. As Seaforth looked at it, he wondered what her five years of married life had done for the girl, who, clad in her simple white frock, looked down at all the splendor of this great room.

Roth's reputation had been common property in London before his marriage, and while there had been a break of a year following his marriage, he had returned to his old habits afterward, with added abandon.

London society, or rather that portion of it which knew the Roths, was wondering just how long Roth would last, and also how long his wife would remain with him in face of the ever-growing cloud of scandal which hung about her husband. Two years after Roth's marriage, his father, abandoning hope, had placed another at the head of the London bank, taking from his son even the empty shadow of authority with which he had been clothed. To Damien this was a relief, as anything



in the nature of continued application to business was now impossible.

Bertha's return to her husband had been followed by an attempt at reformation on his part, but gradually and secretly he returned to his vice. He kept up an elaborate system of deception for a time, masking the jealousy to which the drug drove him under a moody brooding.


The girl had striven desperately to combat the habit that was his ruin. Each of her impassioned pleadings was followed by promises of reform which were slyly broken. She grew to detect his lapses instinctively, and at each return to the drug the shade of the woman who had taught him to use it seemed to grow stronger, mocking her and him. When he had hidden himself with the drug, and his wife was pleading with him through the locked door of his room, sobbing and beating upon its panels, the filth with which his fury resented the shock to his nerves seemed to Bertha to come from the mouth of the bygone harlot. Hatred of the dead woman grew in her, and made her fight long after she realized the struggle was hopeless. At last, bit by bit her efforts relaxed, her desire lost its intensity, and she came to accept the inevitable, to let the dead woman have him. After all, the girl was young, and the other woman had been skilled in her profession which has in it wisdom that is as old as the world.

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When he saw that she had abandoned the attempt to save him, Damien played an elaborate comedy stretching over some months, in the attempt to prove to her that her efforts had been a success. He would protest his freedom from the drug with all the frothing energy the poison gave him. And his wife would pretend to believe him. She also played a comedy, but by this time she scarcely cared. She found it in her heart to accept the dead harlot as a companion, and to bear with the thing which was the work of dead vileness. She was young, mishandled, tired. She let things drift.

Gradually as the power of his vice increased over him, he dropped all subterfuge and gloried openly in his degradation, detailing to her all the depths to which it forced him, trying to make her follow him into them, exulting in the loathing and horror with which she regarded him as an added titivation to his passion. Had she loved him he would have hated her, but her hate nurtured his love into madness.


Why she did not leave him during the second year, Bertha never knew. It may have been the power of social opinion to one who has breathed it as air, or the instinctive maternal feeling which makes women remain with the drunken brutes who misuse them because they are so helpless in the grip of their vice, and surely Damien Roth was help-



less in the grip of his. There would be fits of repentance and remorse, when he seemed to Bertha like a child that wakes to find its nightmare real, and days when all that had been fine in the man he had been came back to mock him and send him in an agony of horrible remorse to kneel at her feet. Perhaps the real reason that held her was the fact that, if she left him, she was sure he would kill himself, and somewhere in the character of Bertha Roth there may have been a bravery to face this thing simply because it had come into her life, and being there she could not disregard it.

Ever since that night in the Ghezireh gardens, a realization had grown upon her that she had been cheated of life; that she was not as other women. She liked the society of men and could enjoy spiritual flirtation, but further than that she could not go. It was not that she was cold, but that she had no feeling. And in the wreck of her life this fact obtruded itself upon her more and more. Had she been as other women, she would perhaps have sought the consolation of another man's love as a payment she was entitled to for her continued endurance of her husband, but to Bertha Roth men as males did not exist.

The years passed in the Roth household without any sign of a change, until the death of Bertha's mother, when her daughter discovered she had been made the sole heir.






This graceful bequest of the departed was not due to a fear for her daughter's future, but to one for her own husband's. A little affair with a little actress, the aftermath of which Mrs. De Frances discovered among her consort's check stubs, convinced her he was not to be trusted with money, which conviction she made plain in her will. There were many poor relatives of Mrs. De Frances to whom some portion of her great wealth would have been grateful, but the lady never thought of them, or if she did it was merely to conclude that they had been poor so long that they must be used to it by that time. She made her will, and, discovering that she was gaining flesh, took on a diet of acids, and in the effort to annihilate her hips annihilated herself.

"She is independent of her husband; why does she stay with him?" thought Seaforth, looking at her portrait.

Leonard Seaforth was an American whose lately completed portrait of Mrs. Roth the critics were saying was the most notable thing since Sargent's "The Misses Wertheimer."

The sunny light of the lamps smoothed the lines that struggle and privation had put into the man's face, and brought out all its beauty.

A witty countrywoman of his once said of Seaforth, "that she did not like him: his eyes were so beautiful no man could possibly live up to them."



They were the eyes of a poet and a dreamer; and now as he passed from table to table, examining the trinkets, they were sad with the look that comes to men who have watched the best years away waiting for fame. Fame may come to them, but their eyes still hold the look of the watcher.

Pausing before a table upon which frolicked a wedding procession of Dresden figurines around a bronze medallion whereon in half relief a human mouth had been modeled, he picked up the bronze and held it to the lamp.

The mouth was that of a man; delicate lips lightly pressed together in the exquisite lines of a smile. The sound of the sweep of satin made him raise his eyes as Mrs. Damien Roth entered.

The woman who came between the curtains differed from the girl of five years ago as the finished picture differs from the sketch. Yet the sketch by its very suggestion of the possibilities holds out a promise which the finished product in all its suavity does not fulfill, simply because there is nothing more to be done.

Obviously there was nothing more to be done to the finishing of Mrs. Roth's beauty. In all its perfection the picture was complete. Her loveliness was of a type with the diamond tassels which hung in blazing radiance from her long rope of pearls, a flower of and an adornment made for wealth. A rare thing which must, like the jewels,

have been produced by the sacrifice of all that was dull and coarse before it could be brought to this exquisite and brilliant state of finish.

He advanced, the medallion forgotten in his hand.

She greeted him with the bright sweetness of manner for which she was noted. Her sweetness had in it the peculiar power of the personal which made its subject believe that it was called into play only for him, yet it was simply a social habit which sprang from the subtle vanity of the desire to please; also, its art was so perfect as to deceive even Bertha herself.

He waited for her to speak with an anxiety in his eyes that showed this meeting to be a continuation of a former one; while she, by graceful ease of her attitude toward him as expressed in the serenity of her manner, was evidently trying to give to this meeting a friendly air that some former meeting must have lacked.

"You disobeyed me," she said, gently.

"I could not help it," he answered. "I had to write and explain—I could not let you go away misunderstanding me."

"I do understand you, and because I do, I must ask you not to write to me. I want you to take this back." She held a letter toward him.

"But," he said, as he took it, "I want you to

know that—that day in my studio I was crazy—mad; can you forgive me?”

“Forgive you?” she questioned with a little smile. “No woman can be really angry because a man tells her he loves her—it is when he persists in doing so, that she is bored.”

“Ah, Bertha, how can you jest with me?”

“I am not jesting with you,” she said, seriously. “My dear friend, I am a curious woman. You will not believe me when I say I am cold.”

“No one with your beauty could be—somewhere there is the fire that is in the glory of your eyes,” he replied.

Again she smiled in slow amusement.

“You are a poet, Leonard.”

“I am in love with you.”

“My friend, do you love me enough to refrain from boring me?” A playful light in her eyes belied her words.


He made a gesture of despair.

She trailed to the fireplace and began to pluck at its banking of jonquils as she said:

“When are you going to send my portrait home?”

“When I can make up my mind to part with it,” he answered. Then seeing she mistook his meaning, added quickly:

“I cannot make up my mind that it is finished as I wish it to be.”



"Every one says it is superb, and I know it looks like me. It is so flattering to have one's portrait resemble one."

"You are kind. Your picture has been my chance."

"I am so glad it has. I shall put it there," pointing to the fireplace, "and I know it will get you lots of orders."

"You are going to take down the Shannon?"

"Yes, I am tired of it, and it does not look a bit like me now."

She faced him and began to swing the chain of pearls, the diamond tassels depending from it making wheels of glittering fire.

His artist's eyes noted the long, beautiful sweep of her satin-clad curves through the silver gauze. Behind her and high above her head the great cavern of the fireplace was a wall of pale-yellow flowers against which her figure stood as if cut from frost, with the white of her shoulders and the ruddy umber of her hair rising above it, in all the loveliness of the flesh.

He looked from her to the picture.

"He has made me so Englishly gawky or so gawkily English," she continued, "I look exactly as if I had concealed heartburn and thought it unmaidenly to ask for the soda."

"Please don't make fun of it; it is beautiful; I wish I had painted you then."

"Why?"

"Because I should have been five years younger."  
He spoke sadly.

Her youth mocked him. Five years—had he been that much younger would the tale of his love have bored her?

Her eyes softened with the quick emotional sympathy she always was so quick to feel and to forget.

"Don't think of the years that are gone," she said; "think of the years that are to be. Think of the success that has come to you."

"It is of that I am thinking. It is so late, so very late."

"But it has come; remember that and enjoy it—also remember not to waste time in thinking of what life is; try to enjoy what it lets you enjoy without thinking—life is not worth it," she shrugged, and began to swing the pearls again.

"I cannot help thinking," he said. "Your portrait is finished; soon it will be gone from my studio, and it is you—as I have seen you—you as I know you to be, a woman made for love. I sit beside it all through the days watching the light I have painted in your eyes, and telling myself that I would give my soul to see that light in your real eyes. Ah, but that canvas is only a shadow, a pale ghost that cannot feel my kisses, yet my life will be desolate without it; for you—you will come no

more—God pity me for the fool I have been to dream that you could stay." He came near to her, and she turned away from the pleading of his eyes.

"My friend," she said a little sadly, for his eyes were very fine. "Surely, you and I can still be friends—it would be so stupid to be otherwise. I like you, I trust you; but to have our pretty story end as a tawdry flirtation of which we would both tire——"

He made an exclamation of protest.


"Well, if you prefer the truth—of which I should tire; no, that would be a silly, out-at-the-elbows ending to a thing that has brought me much pleasure and to you, as you say, fame."

"But I am past my youth, Bertha, and fame without you is empty. Dear, to be near you and not to have your love would be pure pain."

"Leonard," she turned with a touch of feeling in her manner, "nothing can make me love. I like you—you are the only gentleman I ever knew, but can't you, for the sake of the love you say you have for me, be my friend? I need one badly; what is that in your hand?"

Her glance rested on the little medallion.

"I picked it up. The idea impressed me as curious." He held the bronze toward her. Her eyes grew hard.



"Put it where you found it—my husband does not like it to be disturbed."

He replaced it, and when he returned found her still tossing the glittering tassels.

"I was just wondering," she said, in a peculiar voice.

He looked his question.

"You tell me that you can show me how to live; I was wondering if I would let you show me. No, don't touch me"—her tone took an angry edge—"let me think." She began to tear the petals from the jonquils and toss them from her flat palm. The white of the huge bearskin began to fleck with little spots of yellow.


"I am going to tell you something;" the little petals fluttered down in a gentle rain. "A man who has your eyes ought to be able to make love."

Her calmness of tone bewildered him; he could think of nothing to say.

"Yes," she continued, "I have often wondered if you could teach me." Dropping the flower fragments from her listless hands, she walked to a chair, and sinking into it, rested her head on its back and looked up into his eyes, for he had followed her. It were as if a statue had said to him: "Make me love you."

He could think of nothing but the utterly banal remark which he made—

"Let me see you alone, after dinner."





She drew a cigarette from her case.

"Have you a light," she asked.

He gave it to her, and though his heart beat with a power that sent the blood to pound in his ears, could do nothing but stand clearing his throat. A thought came to him that this woman, blowing the smoke from her lips, had lost touch with the real, with the natural in life.

"Bertha," he said at last, and with words came a return of courage to grapple with the thing that possessed her; "my love, I will show you a land into which you have never thought to go."

But Bertha was looking toward the door.

"Oh, Damien," she cried, "do leave that door open; it is stifling in here."

Damien Roth reopened the glass doors through which he had entered. Seaforth was conscious as his host approached of the man's really remarkable distinction of appearance. The features were perfect in modeling, and Greek in their beauty, in spite of the two deep lines which cut into the flesh on either side of the mouth from nostril to chin. Then as the man drew nearer, he recoiled with a creeping of the nerves. Damien Roth's face was the color of ashes, but his mouth stood out from the grey pallor like a scarlet wound. With a start, Seaforth realized that it was painted.

The artist felt himself in the presence of some-

thing monstrous, horrible, and instinctively he glanced at the woman.

She was calmly smoking, and looking down at the light as it glittered in the facets of her dangling ornaments. And with renewed horror the man shuddered at the sight of her delicate beauty. He wanted to seize her and escape out into the clean air, away from that scarlet smile that was like a wound.


"Ah, Seaforth," said Roth, "how is the portrait?" He fiddled in his pockets, then his long, white fingers ran along the chimney shelf. "Where are the cigarettes?" he fretted. His fingers thrust themselves into his pocket again and he drew out his case, but it slipped through his hands and he kicked it into the flowers. Mrs. Roth rose, brought him a cigarette, and held the lighter while he ignited it. Seaforth noticed the quick questioning look she fixed on her husband's shaking hands.

"Do you feel well enough to dine?" he heard her say.

The artist turned away, and began to examine a Goya. His eyes saw only two scarlet lips, curved like those of a mask and horrible in grey pallor.

"Have you seen this, Seaforth?" asked his host's voice at his elbow. The other turned. Damien Roth was holding towards him a bronze medallion.


"This is a portrait sketch, by Isle de le Forain-Evé. Rather clever, don't you think?"



A lamp between the two men showed Seaforth the distended pupils and discolored whites of the mocking eyes; beneath one of them and at a corner of the red mouth two little muscles jumped. In the distance, names began to be shouted from footman to footman. The artist's glance turned in sick repugnance from the face before him, and looked down all the long, superb splendor of this man's drawing-room. At the fireplace a woman stood, the lamplight shining from her silver draperies and glittering in her diamonds; above her Shannon's portrait of a girl.

The doors opened—

"Lady Charteris—Mrs. Rolford," announced the butler.



## CHAPTER X

NIGHT had come, and dinner was over—at least that portion of it which concerned the ladies who were scattered about the drawing-room, in attitudes suggestive of coffee and patience. Through the glass doors the terrace showed bright with lamplit bridge tables.

"And this is your farewell?" said Mrs. Rolford, to Mrs. Roth.

"Yes, it is by-bye. To-morrow we start for America, and pick up the season at Newport. It will be the first time I have seen America in five years."

"You won't find much changed, except Bessie Morris, who has grown fat."

"But that is a horrible change, for her."

"But so nice for her friends. I feel younger and younger every time I meet her waist. My dear, she is simply a waist, nothing more. All the most powerful lacing can do is just make two little dents. It is nature's revenge on her for being so jealous of her husband. Jealous women are always fat; the jealousy may bring the fat, or the

fat bring the jealousy, but, if you notice, the wronged wife generally has a wrong figure," and the lady stretched her slender length among the cushions and blew a little puff of smoke at the ills of the flesh.

"I am sure you are mistaken," Lady Charteris interjected. "Men like plumpness," and she raised her fan to cover the slight crease in her chin.


"What novel is your authority for that idea?" inquired Mrs. Rolford.

"I am glad the season is over," hastily remarked Mrs. Roth; "and I am so anxious to see America again."

"You will have no trouble in seeing it or hearing it, either," said Mrs. Rolford. "You will find Newport jiggling around the same little provincial circle they call society. When a woman has a tiara and a ballroom, the papers call her a social leader."

"And when they have a ball every three weeks in the New York season, they all look exhausted and ask you if the pace isn't killing. Why, when I told them that London had seven to ten in a night, they asked each other how it was that when an American girl married abroad, she always belittled her own country," said Lady Charteris.

"I like Americans," said Mrs. Rolford. "But I don't like to meet people here that I would not receive in my own country. It is so fearfully hard



to make the English understand our social distinctions. Now you, Bertha, receive people whom you would never think of permitting in your drawing-room, if you were in America."

"Really, whom do you mean?"

"This man Seaforth; who is he?"

"A wonderful artist, and my friend."

"My dear, he was some kind of a newspaper-sketch man, so I am told."

"Alice, what difference does it make? He is my friend. Some day we Americans will be so sure of our social positions that to receive an artist will not shatter it."

"Bertha, dear, you are so much younger that I may give you some good advice. You are one of the internationally known Americans, and it is to you we look to enlighten the English as to the fact that we have an aristocracy in the States."

"Why not let the English find that out?" said Bertha.

Both ladies broke into protests, leaving their hostess time for reflection. Bertha had early discovered that no matter which of her compatriots she received, others invariably told her that they were not representative of the best people at home. "The best people at home" always seem the worst people abroad. Bertha also resented the common attitude of criticism of her countrymen. Why, in the name of high heaven, will a certain

type of American persist in explaining his country? Why should he care what the foreigner thinks of the States? If the foreigner is not a fool, the splendid vigor of America's virile youth will be plain to him.

A remark of Mrs. Rolford's caught Bertha's attention.

"Imagine," said that lady, "that horrible wife of Jack Whitsey's is actually beginning to be received at some houses."

"Is Jack married?" inquired Mrs. Roth.

"Yes, my dear, to a person from Pittsburg, who has a complexion like chopped beef."

"Really, how long has he been married?"

"Four years. He went into the law for a time, but it was so much easier to go into his wife's bank account that he gave it up."

"What was her name?"

"My love, I don't know that she had a name, but she had oodles of money and shows it. The sort of creature that is broken out with sunbursts like a rash."

Bertha crossed her feet on the footstool, and indulged in a mental purr. If one's old sweetheart must marry, it is pleasant to think it is to some one with a complexion like chopped beef. Women always claim a life interest in love's insurance policies, even when they have permitted them to lapse.

"I am glad he has married well," she said aloud.

"I think it a pity," answered Mrs. Rolford. "He was doing so nicely in the law. State tractions retained him and reprinted his speech in its defense all over the country, then came the woman from Pittsburg, and," she shrugged, blew a curl of smoke, and added:

"He has a little apartment in the Bell-Haven where his wife never comes, and his dinners there are charming."

"You say his wife never comes there?"

"No; Jack is so fond of pretty color schemes, and her complexion only goes with hotel furniture."

"Poor fellow," said Bertha. Women can forgive a man a frightful lot of homeliness, in his wife.

"I detest a mercenary man," said Lady Charteris.

"Where is that handsome Esme Hope-Stewart?" asked Mrs. Rolford, innocently.

"I don't know; he was not a friend of mine," replied Lady Charteris.

"Do you know, Bertha?" Mrs. Rolford asked.

"He smashed, last year, and went into bankruptcy."

"He was a horrible moral character. I forbade him my doors two years ago," said Lady Charteris, fingering her "Social Purity" ribbon.

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"I rather liked Esme, he was amusing," Bertha replied.

"That is the trouble with amusing people; they never have money enough to last." Mrs. Rolford glanced in a tired manner at the doors to the dining-room. A little feminine society went a long way on the road to boredom. The doors opened. The ladies returned to an active acknowledgment of life, as singly or in groups the men entered. The room began to flutter with fans. Footmen set wide the doors to the terrace, and the business of the evening began.

Seaforth watched the last couple exit to the gambling. The open doors to the terrace framed the brightly lighted groups about the tables. It was very hot and he did not gamble, so he stood beneath her portrait, pondering upon the course his life had taken since he had met her.

An American, his early success in illustrating had given him enough money to go to Paris for a summer vacation. He returned to America in the fall, but in the remembered light of Paris, his profession showed itself as a cheap and tawdry way to a living, and his former pride in it turned to hate. The publishers told him that his new style was "impossible," meaning artistically brutal, and begged him to return to the heads and "story pictures" of saccharine sexlessness which he, in common with the other young artists of his native land,



thrust upon a hapless public; but he refused, and returned to Paris that the art in him might have birth.

In Paris came the weary years, and the question whether the sacrifice of his life was worth the price. The critics admired, but his departure from the old standards was too absolute for his branch of the profession—portraiture. The successful portrait painter must please the women, and women are by instinct conventional, in art.

One chance he had. On one of his infrequent visits to the United States he was commissioned to paint a rich American who was under the mistaken impression that she was of the British nobility because she happened to have married into it. He was told that if he would flatter her, his name was made. However, he painted her as he saw her; and his eyes were not kind, neither was she; she returned the portrait. As he would not paint the women as they hoped, he saw them as they passed him by for a newly landed and beautifully bearded Frenchman, who charged exorbitant prices, and made nice things like big colored photographs; it was rumored he had a photographer hidden behind his studio curtains to snap the fair sitters.

Seaforth returned to Paris a broken, soured fellow who would get drunk and kick his canvases to shreds.

One day, up his dingy stairs came two ladies, and

Mrs. Damien Roth informed him that she had seen a drypoint by him in Brentano's, and desired one done of herself.

The drypoint of Mrs. Roth led to a number of orders from her friends. Finally, Bertha induced him to try his luck in London, where she sat to him for her portrait in oils. The picture now in the Metropolitan Museum was the result. She stands in a long robe of black, with a black patch on her chin; the whole background filled with ash-grey velvet draperies, the petals of a dead rose at her feet. A wonderful thing it was, and it made the fame of Seaforth, and sent copies of Mrs. Roth's beauty around the world. Poor Seaforth! Who looking at it would believe it to be by the same hand that now does those sallow ladies starting up from out of perspective couches, looking as if they were trying to combine the effects of too much lobster with gentility? This was the history of Seaforth's rise.

A step behind him made the artist turn.

"I refuse to play without my luck-bringer," laughed Bertha. "Mr. Seaforth will help me to find it." She began to turn over the cushions where she had sat. Through the doors her partners chaffed and urged her return.

The mask of her husband's face watched her as he always watched her, with the red lips drawn into a little smile.

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Seaforth began to finger the ornaments of the tables.

"No, I had it when I sat on this couch," she protested. "Stoop down and look under it, like a dear man."

He came to her side and fell on his knees, peering under the sofa. As she turned the pillows, her head bent towards him and she whispered, "By the fountain, in the garden. Go out through the library." She laughed and held up a little ivory St. Joseph, saying:

"It was under the pillow. Now I shall be able to make it no trumps."

Half an hour later, he was waiting in the black depths of the garden. Over the dim masses of the clipped hedges he saw the loom of the house and the lamp-lit terrace, with its groups of card players. At last he saw her rise and descend the steps. Presently, she came out of the dark mouth of an alley.

"I cannot be gone long," she said; "my husband tired of the game and retired, but he may return."

"Bertha, my love, my dear love," he said, and took her in his arms. For a moment she stood motionless. He felt her soft body, and the subtle perfumes of her hair rose to him. Then very quietly she drew away from his arms.

"Leonard," she said, "it is no use. You cannot make me feel—no one can."

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"My love," he whispered, "how can you hope to feel now—here in this horrible place, near him?"

She shook her head. "It is hopeless. I have been cheated."

"You have not been cheated. Poor bruised, frozen thing that you are. If love were not in you, I would not be so mad for you."

"You are a poet—you are in love with yourself as you think it is in me. No, I am not as the others; if I were I could find some happiness. You cannot teach me, nor put into me that which I do not feel. I thought this over during dinner, and we must say good-bye." She held out her hand.

He grasped it and covered it with hot kisses. Instantly and with a cry of repugnance, she drew it away. Her cry stabbed him, and with a sob he sank to his knees, and burying his face in her draperies kissed them, his shoulders shaking with his sobs.

Bertha Roth looked down at him, and into her eyes came a pity for his pain, and for herself that she could not feel a throb of it. The artist-poet's love had warmed her no more than merest flirtation of the drawing-room.

"You hurt me; stand up," she said with a feeling that she must stop this experimenting; it seemed to be rather cruel.

"Bertha," he begged, "don't leave me."

"I must go now," she said with gentle firmness;



"I will write you in the morning." She stooped and gathered her gauze and satin about her and her smile gave him hope. He let her go.

Her letter next day was a friendly and final good-bye.

## CHAPTER XI

**H**E would ride on top—of course, the air would do him good—but how is he to get down? There will be some nasty thing in the papers if he falls off at the church,” and Mrs. Morris turned her ample gorgeousness, and gazed in perplexity at Mrs. Roth.

The Morris’ omnibus was rattling down the hill over the rough Newport cobblestones with such members of the lady’s house party who felt moved to abandon bridge and bathing for the more decorous observance of Sunday.

Bessie Morris’s remarks referred to a young gentleman who had insisted upon mounting to a seat on the vehicle’s roof, and now, as the wall of the churchyard lined by the empty equipages of fashion went by the windows, the question of his descent engrossed his hostess to the secret amusement of her other guests.

“Bertha,” she begged, “can’t you induce him to go home? Speak to him through the footman’s tube. He said he came because you did. He may go home, if you ask him. If he falls off the roof,

his mother will never forgive me. And he never lets any one help him do anything—he'll insist on getting down by himself. And that dreadful Father Marvin preaches on drink to-day—he may point us out; he does anything for sensation. It is horribly hard to give a house party and go to church, too. I hope we get the credit for it. Speak to him, Bertha."

Mrs. Roth smilingly picked up the tube. In the middle of her plea the 'bus drew up to the curb, and from the careful and undivided attention which the throng of footmen and chauffeurs bestowed on its roof, Bertha concluded that Ned Crand was replying into anything but the telephone. With a hopeless gesture to her hostess, she abandoned the attempt and the party descended.

Through the trees the old church, its yard slabbed with brown tombstones, stood all mellow with the hot August sun. The path to the door was bright with the colors of gay toilettes and sunshades. Down the steep streets the tumbled-down houses of Newport—the real Newport—sprawled in the bright, still warmth of Sunday.

"Oh, oh!" Mrs. Morris's hand clutched Bertha's.

From the 'bus roof rose the elaborate form of Mr. Crand, and one carefully gaitered foot waved in search of the step. Footmen sprang to



aid, but were violently assured that the matter was one strictly between Mr. Crand and the steps themselves. It seemed that the next tableau must be a pile of cream flannel in the roadway, but each lurch was saved from catastrophe by a timely clutch at the handrail, a stagger and brace, then a white-gloved hand would wave at Bertha and a solemn voice assure her:

"I am coming; wait for me."

At last the youth stood in calm, red dignity, beside Mrs. Roth. "That woman," he said, with a disapproving eye on his hostess, "that woman ought to have a motor 'bus—terrible thing to ask a man to get out of a carriage with horses—might start up any time—have to be awful careful—dangerous trust life in one—something should be done to her risking her guests' necks—notice how careful I was? Had to be—what does she care if I break my neck?"


"You were quite right, to take precautions," said Bertha, soothingly, and closed her sunshade.

Mr. Crand took it from her, and opened it again, saying:

"Allow me, Bertha."

"Let us walk in the yard; I want to read the funny epitaphs," she suggested.

"You wanted to go to church, and I'll take you there," he returned with masculine decision in the face of feminine irresolution. And he escorted her



up the walk as though it were lined with lions roaring for blood.

With a gasp of relief, Mrs. Morris marshaled her party, and followed.

The cool brightness of Bertha's manner did not reveal her annoyance. Her companion's condition did not concern her beyond the fact that she foresaw that, once in the church, the loud solemnity of his observations would make her ridiculous; furthermore, the subdued mirth of her friends convinced her that they saw in the situation the practical form of humor which most appealed to them.

The walk was crowded, and Bertha was stopped every few steps by some acquaintance, much to the annoyance of her escort, who was solicitous that her desire to attend church should not be unduly retarded.

"Piggy Crand, stop pulling my arm," cried a blonde débutante with impatience, adding, to Mrs. Roth:

"Have you ever heard Father Marvin?"

"How can she hear him if you won't let her go into the church?" inquired Bertha's escort.

"Now, Ned, dear," this from Bertha; "Father Marvin assisted at my wedding, Lina."

"He preached a ripping sermon on divorce, last week," said the social bud. "I am so sorry he is only substituting here for a few weeks. You will like him."

"But how can she like him, if she don't see him? And how can she see him if you don't let her into the church?" demanded Crand, loudly.

"Come, let us go in, then," said Bertha, in response to the general smile of amusement.

"I have asked a question," announced her escort in hurt tones.

"We will answer it in church."

"No." He shook his head not to be beguiled by female wiles.

"I want her to answer it now."

"But, Lina has gone into church."

"Gone into church," cried Mr. Crand, in great wrath; "gone into church after trying to stop you from goin'—impossible—come on, 'til I tell her what I think of her——"

Bertha glanced about for some gentleman of her acquaintance, but the crush at the door had separated her from her party, and her anxious eyes did not encounter a familiar face.

"Can I be of service, Mrs. Roth?" inquired a pleasant voice behind her.

Turning, she saw Jack Whitsey.

"Please take care of him, Jack," she said, and it was not until she had escaped and was settled in her pew that she reflected she had called him Jack as easily as when they had last met on her wedding day, five years ago.

Jack Whitsey entered the church some ten

minutes later after disposing of the lad, and taking a seat under the gallery proceeded to scan the congregation for Mrs. Roth. The wilderness of plumes and elaborately dressed heads did not disclose her at first glance. Had she gone home? he wondered. He remembered she had always had a fear of intoxicated men, although it also occurred to him that her manner at the church door had implied only the annoyance of the situation. Where could she be?

Of course, he had read of her arrival in America and her visit to Newport, but it had not stirred old emotions particularly. Had he been in the place he would have looked her up for a chat; but he was on a cruise, and not until this Sunday had his yacht dropped anchor in the harbor. Well, he would look her up now. The glance he had at her showed a very beautiful woman, quite justifying her international reputation. Annoyed at his inability to discover her, he renewed his examination of the crowded pews.


The sight of Newport at its devotions always stirred the sense of the cynical in him, and particularly so to-day when all the artificial, tinted hair and tinted, artificial faces bent over elaborate prayer-books and were blessed by Father Marvin.

Father Marvin's sermon on divorce had given him much notoriety. He was one of the clergymen of the rich whose denunciation of their

vices act as a religious cocktail to the tedium of their ordinary worship. His present sermon was on "drink," and delivered in his best and most violent vein. He really looked very well. The color which had excited Mrs. Morris's unkind suspicion the day of Bertha's wedding was gone. An ascetic pallor emphasized the becoming emaciation of his fine head, while blue shadows brought out the brilliancy of his much admired eyes.

"He has really done those shadows with some art," thought Jack. His wandering attention was arrested by the sight of Mrs. Roth's pure profile and soft coloring in vivid relief against the white and gold of a very modish memorial tablet, whereon in a posture of sorrow, and nothing else, an angel proclaimed the exceeding grief of a recently bereaved widow.

Whitsey's taste had been trained of latter years to a high appreciation of the finished, and now he realized with a thrill of admiration the effect of rarity and completeness which was the distinctive trait of Bertha's beauty. Into his memory came the portrait that had been done of her as a girl. He saw her as she had been then, a young girl in white against a background of leaves, but this slender woman in copper and turquoise against the naked angel and the gold mosaic pleased his later taste better. The past five years and the possession of a bank balance had taught him the appreciation



of the costly as only the ability to pay for it can teach those to whom it is life.

Bertha was aware of his scrutiny. She was glad she had worn this particular gown in view of the background. It almost seemed that providence had rewarded her for the loss of a morning's bridge by a guidance of her taste with a view to the memorial tablet. She also knew that the delicate tones of her complexion, faintly shadowed by the turquoise plumes, must suggest a contrast with another complexion like chopped beef. She wondered if he would meet her as she left the church.


He did speak to her. Emerging from the church door she found him, and he escorted her to the carriage. Only a few steps, but momentous for both of them, for at the gate Damien Roth was standing, a smile on his scarlet lips.

Possibly the peculiar morbid jealousy engendered by the drug had prompted him to brave the vivid sunlight he so detested to follow his wife when he had read that Whitsey's yacht was in the harbor, yet he was sufficiently master of himself to greet his former rival with smiling, offhand friendliness.

Whitsey felt Bertha's hand tremble as he assisted her into the 'bus.

"Now you are in Newport, you must come and see us often," said the husband.

Bertha turned, a touch of high color in her



cheeks, her lips parted, but before she could speak, her husband continued:

"I have to run over to Jamestown a great deal, but Bertha will be glad to see you." He laid his thin, waxen fingers on Whitsey's sunburned ones.

"Come to dinner to-night, Jack," called Mrs. Morris, as the 'bus rolled away. From the back window Damien Roth smiled at him.

"Bertha, what do you think of your old flame?" asked Bessie Morris.

She made some laughing reply, but her eyes did not leave a certain place on the carriage door where the thin, pale, waxen fingers had rested upon a sunburned hand.

## CHAPTER XII

**S**HE stood by the table, cool, indifferent, scornful; in her eyes the hard weariness of past failures. Her husband's passionate, obscene vituperation would end, she knew, only when the short-lived energy born of the drug was past. She was very tired, and to-night his strained, hoarse voice seemed to rub raw every nerve, yet she knew that nothing was to be done, but to maintain the cloak of her cold bravery until that fierce whisper should wear itself to silence.

She was afraid, or rather fear stood ready to thrust itself upon her should she relax her guard. But after all, there was nothing new in the scene, one of a thousand that had marked her married life. From sheer brutal repetition she had become accustomed to them, but to-night she wanted to be alone, to think.

The lights from her dressing-table glittered in a thousand little mirror flashes from the sweep of her spangled laces. She had put on this gown for the dinner to which Jack Whitsey had been bidden. The dinner was over. Jack had come and gone.



It was the depth of night, and across the table, his face ash-grey in the electric light, her husband leaned, watching her through the slits of his eyelids, horrible streams of vileness from the cancer of his soul dripping from his scarlet lips.


It was about Jack—always the same—always Jack. For years, ever since in the first glow of the long ago honeymoon she had told him of the brief little flirtation, the few little twilight hours in the mountains when Jack and she had played awhile at love, her husband had hated him. In the first days after she had told him he had thought nothing of it, then as he returned to his vice he returned to her confession and read into it all that his imagination suspected. The confession had been only a little girlish desire that he, the rich, the courted, should see that she too had been sought, if only for a few hours, by a man who dared not surmount her mother's opposition. That little yielding to vanity had proved an expensive indulgence. In his sane moments the husband scarcely remembered the affair, but when the drug possessed him he was obsessed by it, and by the desire amounting to madness to force from his wife the confession of her guilt, and the details of her imagined degradation.

At first she had been horrified, angry, protesting her innocence, but as the wretched, trivial farce was repeated and repeated she came to go

through her part with cold indifference that masked a frightened disgust. Bertha's nature was naturally a delicate one, but the scenes through which her husband forced her gradually became revolting to her finer senses merely because of this vulgarity.

From the moment of seeing Whitsey at the church she realized that this interview with her husband was inevitable, yet Damien's cordiality to Jack had somewhat deceived her.

The dinner had been an informal one, to which Whitsey had come and gone with no other thought than that Bertha seemed rather indifferent to him, and that Roth's arrival in the middle of the meal was unkind to the hostess. Damien had, however, been excessively cordial, and pressed upon him an invitation to the place on Long Island for which the Roths intended shortly to depart. In return, Jack had announced his intention of opening a small apartment of his own in the city for a series of little dinners and one-night dips into the life of New York, as a relief to the tedium of the autumn in the country. As fashion had decided not to come into town until after the holidays, the prospect pleased the ladies with the exception of Mrs. Roth, who voiced her detestation of the city until after Christmas. However, Roth laughingly promised to produce his wife, and Jack departed



well satisfied with the impression he had made upon all concerned.

Bertha had mounted to her room and waited, first sending her maid away. Presently her door had been opened and her husband entered, and for an hour she had been listening to his outburst of distorted jealousy.

The attack was finally losing its force, and turning a shoulder she seated herself at the dressing-table and began to cut the threads with which a jeweled ornament was sewn to her bodice. In the mirror his face looked at her with all the sneering, abandoned malevolence to which she was so accustomed.

"If you are quite through, I will ring for my maid," she said at last.

"I'm through for now, but you and your discarded lover—your former kept man——"

She cut a thread very carefully.

"I'll have the truth from one of you or the other—do you hear me, you common hussy? You vile street——"

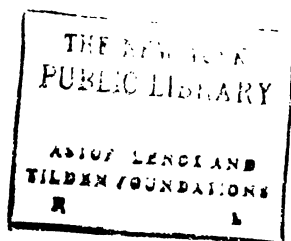
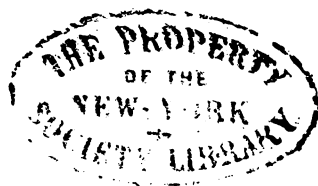
His elbow brushed some roses. He dashed the vase to the floor and stamped petals and Sèvres into the rug.

She unhooked her pearl collar, and drew it from her neck.

"All I want you to do," said the hoarse whine behind her—the man's anger was evidently ex-



“In the mirror his face looked at her with all the sneering . . .  
malevolence to which she was so accustomed.”



hausted on the vase—"all I ask of you is just to confess. Tell me that he was your lover and I will ask you no more—just say it—tell me that he was—tell me that, and I'll be satisfied."


She laid the collar in its case. Would a lie soothe him? She knew it would not. He would want details. She smiled with the thought of the whole mad, foolish, trivial thing.

With a scream he clutched her. She twisted away, but his fist in her laces tore them to the girdle. Still holding the torn strip, he thrust his twitching face close to hers. Her eyes met his in bravery that her fluttering breath belied.

"Laugh at me," he whispered; "laugh, but I will have the truth. I brought you back from Europe that I might see you together, that from a word, a look of either of you, I could get the truth. I will read from your eyes, or his, the confession your damned lying lips won't give. I'll have it—I'll have it——"

"If you are quite through, I will ring," she said.

"You thought yourself wise, to-night—very wise you thought yourself, declining his dinner invitation. Not like old times? Well, you'll meet him some more now, and I'll be there. The old jolly three—the husband, the lover and their common property. Ah, don't you smile at me, you low, brazen——"



Holding his clenched fists toward her, he screamed all the mad horror of his frenzy.

Long after her maid had made her ready for the night, Bertha stood at her window and watched the stars. In her arms she held a little dog. It had been with her before her marriage, and had come to represent to her the quiet days of her youth.

She must separate from her husband, she told herself. Not violently and with scandal, but calmly, protecting herself, and prepared to turn to the law if he forced her to do so. She would do nothing rashly. She would see her father, and get his advice. She had done her duty by her husband, and if she had failed, still she had tried to the utmost of her strength and power. She did not hate him—as well hate some wild beast, but the instinct of self-salvation demanded that they part. Something in the air of her home-land, some clean freshness of youth had blown away the mist that had obscured her judgment in another older, more vice-tolerant, land. They must separate. But with all regard for both their names. When her father came back from Hot Springs she would consult with him concerning the proper steps.

The warm little silken head against her arm felt almost like a child's. How would it feel to have some child that one could really love?

Children were invariably bores. Could the

mere fact that a child was all one's own make one love it? But children were never all one's own. Any child of hers would be partly that poor wretch's, too. How fortunate that she had no child!

With delicate gentleness she put the little spaniel into its basket.



## CHAPTER XIII

**M**R. Whitsey is not at his home, madam.”  
“Did you call at his apartments in the Bell-Haven?”

“Yes, madam, and he has not been there for two days.”

“Look up his clubs in the Blue Book, and call them all—all, you understand?”

The servant bowed.

“Be sure and leave a message at each, that he is to call Mrs. Roth at once, on a matter of the utmost importance.”

The footman withdrew, and Bertha went to the window. Through the cold November rain the waters of Long Island Sound showed grey against a grey sky. The wide lawns of the Roth place were a sodden carpet of dead grass. Against the black lines of the hedges statues swathed like mummies had a peculiar effect of lifelessness, as though the great house was guarded by the shrouded ghosts of former pleasures.

The woman told herself that such a day as this was a fitting ending to her married life, and she

was glad that the scene of the morning had given her decision enough to make an end.

She shivered. The memory of the morning was too vivid. Yet she was glad that it had occurred. The murder of the poor little dog had opened her eyes to her peril and to Jack's. Where was Jack?

She rang the bell.

"Have you reached Mr. Whitsey?" she inquired of the servant.

"No, madam. I am still calling his clubs."

The man withdrew. His manner did not convey the seething excitement of the stables and servants' hall.

Where could Jack be? She must find and warn him that Damien was looking for him to kill him. The announcement of her intention to leave the house had driven her husband into a murderous rage against Whitsey. Where could Jack be? Why had she not kept her resolution made that August night at Newport, to leave her husband?

She began to pace about the room, rearranging the flowers, poking the fire, doing the little aimless things that her restless fingers found.

How long they were getting Jack! Servants were so stupid. Why had she allowed her father to persuade her to remain with her husband? The conventions—what a flimsy contrast the word seemed now, to that horrible scene a few hours ago! If he should find Jack—if he should kill

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him? She must leave the house before her husband came back. Where could he have gone? He was searching for Whitsey. But where—where?

She wanted to scream, but if she did she would lose control of her nerves. And she must hold herself. She must save Jack—prevent him from coming down to the Hunt ball that night.

What if he had started, already? How slow that servant was!

The footman entered.

"I have called all his clubs, madam, but they have not seen him since noon, when he lunched at the Racquet," announced the man.

What was to be done? If he came down to the ball, Damien would be there. Possibly Jack might come by motor, and dress at the club. He might be there now.

"I will send a note to the Hunt Club," she said. "Let some one go with it on horseback, at once."

She sat at her desk, but the thought that Jack might be even now within reach of her husband made her cold fingers tremble so that she blotted the page. To rewrite the note seemed an impossible labor, beyond the power of her control. What would she do in the long, black hours before she knew he was safe?

"Tell them to saddle Bluegrass. I will ride, myself," she directed. What did she care what the servants thought? She must know that he was

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warned. If she met him she could then go up to the city, and under the protection of her lawyers, take steps for her divorce. There would be no trouble; she was clearly in a position to dictate.

An hour later the servants at the Hunt Club were surprised by the appearance of Mrs. Roth in dripping habit and with wind-blown hair. Upon inquiring for Mr. Whitsey, she was told that he had not arrived. She wrote him a note and left it, together with an unreasonably large sum of money, to insure its delivery, and galloped away into the night. The servant to whom she intrusted it was quick to get in touch with his crony, "The Saunterer," on *Town Tattle*, and impart the affair to him.

Bertha returned home wet and exhausted, to find no news of Whitsey. She changed, then dined alone, being informed that her husband had not returned.

Where could he be? A thousand conjectures tormented her sick fancy. He might be at the club waiting the arrival of Whitsey. Suppose he should meet Jack before her note was delivered?

A vivid picture grew before her eyes. She saw a black huddle on the floor, and above it the pale face and scarlet smile of her husband.

"The motor in time for the dance at the Hunt Club," she told the butler.

She could not sit quietly in the vast silence of

that house, while any horror might be happening. She must be near . . . she must save him . . . she could not sit idle here, while out in the night her husband waited for Jack.

It was during her toilette that her maid said:

"Madam has such a color. Will madam have just a touch of pallor? It is more suitable to the tones of madam's gown."

Bertha glanced into the mirror. Her eyes shone feverishly, and her cheeks were blazing.

"Yes—yes, but be quick."

She drew her cloak about her with shaking hands. Would she be in time?


"Did you reach Mr. Whitsey?" she inquired of the butler at the door of her limousine.

"No, madam."

The man closed the door, and the dim hedges swept by the windows. Would she be in time? A bright flash and the lanterns on her gates passed.

She directed the chauffeur to hurry.

The windows were a whirling darkness. She lay back and her eyes closed; before them the repetition of a picture she had seen at dinner: the ballroom, with its screaming women and yelling, pink-coated men, the twisting black heap under the pistol smoke on the floor, and above it the pale face and the scarlet lips parted in a smile. A sort of coma of suffering came upon her—a



feeling that she was being borne towards some predestined, long appointed thing.

The windows filled with the lighted porches of the club.

"Has Mr. Whitsey arrived?" she inquired of the servant who opened the door of the limousine.

"Yes, madam; just arrived."

"Mr. Roth?"

"Yes, madam; he came an hour ago."

## CHAPTER XIV

**O**F course people will cut her," said Mrs. Wellas Rolford, stripping the furred walking-boots from a tiny Maltese dog on her lap, "though it is perfectly dreadful to be forced to cut rich people who are generous. It is like a call for more margin from one's brokers."

"I do not see why any one should cut her. The possession of glass houses is not peculiar to the Damien Roths," replied her hostess, irritably.

Mrs. Rolford's slender figure, in its clinging grey velvets against the deep crimson of the huge throne chair, would have annoyed a woman less conscious of her waist than was Mrs. Jim Morris. Her caller's lightly penciled brows arched, and she smiled. The possession of glass houses was, after all, a calamity more easily borne than such a waist line as poor Mrs. Jim's.

"My dear," she drawled, "no one objects to broken glass except when the husband throws the missiles. Then, instead of sending for the glazier, we all reach for stones, those of us under suspicion casting the largest. In Bertha's case the

bombardment will be terrific, her set includes so many divorcées.

"But, Alice, no one has ever suspected Bertha's friendship for Jack Whitsey to be anything but an ordinary one. It is all so shocking!"

Alice Rolford laughed. "My dear Bessie, it is always a shock when careful people become careless. We grow to depend on certain people to be correct, just as we depend on the butler to serve our dinners properly. Then, when we discover we are mistaken the shock is terrible—almost as frightful as if the fish were to follow the roast. One feels the pillars of society tremble."

Mrs. Morris waited until a servant had placed the tea service on a low table by the hearth before she replied. "What I cannot understand," she said with a perplexed frown, "is how Bertha could prefer Jack Whitsey to her husband. Why, Damien Roth is the handsomest man I know."

"But he is her husband," smiled Mrs. Rolford, letting her silver fox furs slip from her graceful shoulders and adding another lump of sugar to her tea. "I never could understand how other women tire of their husbands. No husbands are tiresome, except one's own."

"It is very hard to say nowadays which are one's own," her hostess retorted, sharply. The removal of her visitor's furs disclosed a passementerie effect irritating in the extreme to a broad-busted

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matron. "My dear, how charming!" she continued. "Celeste tells me all the actresses are wearing *passementerie*."

"But it makes one look so frightfully thin," said Alice Rolford, deprecatingly, raising an arm that her hostess might see the slender lines of her waist.

"Miss Farrand—Mr. Van Klean," announced a footman, drawing aside the brocades in the doorway.


A young girl of twenty entered, followed by a pale, middle-aged man.

"Hello, auntie!" she cried. "Jimmie and I were passing and saw you had taken the boards down, so we popped in on the chance you were back in town."

As she emerged from her furs, like a toy from its wrappings, she suggested an anemic French doll from the mechanically and artificially dressed hair to the last button of the artificially and mechanically correct costume.

"Who do you think we saw walking down the avenue?" she trilled in a high musical voice. "Bertha Roth! Yes," answering the ejaculations of her auditors, "she came out of the park at Eighty-first Street."

Mrs. Morris paused with the cocktail shaker upraised in surprise, "You don't say so! Why, I thought she was in Hempstead."



"Will some one take pity on me and tell me what has happened?" implored the man of the party. "Remember, I have been shooting at Bernardsville for two days, and beyond knowing that the matrimonial fat is in the fire, I am ignorant. And in scandal, ignorance is far from bliss."

"Poor, dear Jimmie!" Mrs. Rolford turned to him compassionately. "Don't you know that Damien Roth and Jack Whitsey had a fearful row at the Hunt Club ball? Fisticuffs all over the place—Bertha and Jack came to the club together and Damien followed them. They say there had been a dreadful scene at home—and Damien rushed on Jack in the smoking-room—knocked him out, in fact. Then Bertha rushes through the crowd and tries to separate them. Most dramatic. Their blood all over her dress. Hysterics, and Damien at the Plaza, seeing no one but his lawyers, and Bertha, poor Bertha, soon to be free as a bird."

"Well, that ought to please her."

"No, Jimmie, a woman always desires to be free of her cage; but, before she is, she likes to poke her head out and see that the door of another one is open. In Bertha's case, the door of Jack Whitsey's cage is shut, and his wife will see to it that the catch remains down."

"His wife is the most vindictive woman in New York," interjected Mr. Van Klean.

"But she is very religious," said Mrs. Morris. "Perhaps she may forgive them."

"My dear," answered Mrs. Rolford, "Mrs. Whitsey got into religion, as she got into society, by breaching the walls. She is a religious Moll Pitcher, and a red-headed one at that. She will forgive her husband after she has ruined Bertha."


"Still," murmured Mrs. Morris, returning to her tea service, "the families may hush it up. Mrs. Whitsey may be brought to terms—even a red-headed woman can hear reason if it is fired at her from a cannon."

"Mr. Cleating!" announced the butler.

"Oh, I am so glad you are at home!" and a dapper, bald-headed little man darted through the curtains. "My dear Bessie," he cried, in shrill affected tones, "I just saw Bertha Roth on the block above, as I came up your steps. Have you seen the papers, people?"

"No."

"It's in all of them. Jack Whitsey's wife gave them the tip. Interview with her—pictures of Bertha and Jack—picture of Bishop Oldman, labeled Damien—photograph of the clubhouse—drawing of Damien and Jack soaking each other, and diagrams of their faces with stars where the punches landed—all this set in a frame of weeping cupids passing divorces on plates."



He laughed, taking a tea-cup in his puny ringed fingers.

"She certainly had the courage of her convictions," said Mrs. Rolford, gathering her furs together, preparatory to rising.

"Her conviction, you should say," grinned Cleating, helping to adjust the little dog's shoes. "The verdict is rendered. In society we always have the verdict before the trial. Then there is no suspense."

"Mrs. Damien Roth!" said the footman, appearing against the long sweep of the satin curtains.

A lump of sugar fell clattering from the sugar tongs in Mrs. Morris's hand, as speechless the group turned toward her.

The time had arrived for the powerful Mrs. James Morris to pronounce her edict—to throw the mantle of her protection, or to raise the first bar of the social gate that had heretofore stood open to the feet of Mrs. Damien Roth.

Mrs. Morris was a charitable woman; but this afternoon her nerves had been rasped by the appearance of her friend, Mrs. Rolford, looking exceptionally well, when she had been reported a wreck after the exactions of the Long Island season, and wearing a shade of grey her hostess had believed to be the exclusive property of her own modiste. She had made Mrs. Morris conscious of her years and her waist line. Feeling the intrusion

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of another pretty woman to be more than charity was called upon to bear, she turned to the servant:

"Not at home."

The curtains closed behind the man, and her guests looked at each other, the clang of the social gate in their ears, the pitiless click of its locks sounding above their laughter and the tinkle of tea-cups.

## CHAPTER XV

**B**ERTHA ROTH descended the Morris steps and stood irresolute. A halt in the traffic at the Plaza, three blocks below, barred her entrance to the park with a double line of carriages and motors, brass and silver glinting and sparkling in the setting sun.

Red heliographs of the coming night winked from high windows in the darkening masses of hotels and apartments bordering Fifty-ninth Street. The glimpse of a familiar face in the square of a brougham window caused her to turn off the avenue, and, with one of those transitions so familiar to New York, the street became suddenly squalid, a brown stone canyon of cheap apartments splotted over with signs of humble callings.

In the relief of her escape from a familiar environment, Bertha Roth hurried on, oblivious to the surprise her slender elegance, in its sables and tailored tweeds, attracted amidst the stream of returning workers. Her beauty, conspicuous any-

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where for its fine distinction of type, shone here with all the vividness of an orchid in a gutter.

The impulse to enter the Morris house had overtaken her so suddenly and irresistibly that she mistook it for the courage to face her world and dispute its verdict. Now fleeing, her wet, trembling hands clutched in her muff, she realized that it had been cowardice after all—the cowardice that could not brook delay—and too late she saw that delay was what he needed. To have stayed in the country, fighting calmly, with paid advice and all the art that reflection and the council of her family would have given her, was what should have been done. In her panic rush to the city that morning, she had yielded to an impulse of the nerves and been betrayed by them. Still, there were things that might be done if she could but think of them. Her family was powerful and she popular. Other women as influential as Bessie Morris would champion her cause, if only in memory of the time when they had stood naked under the fearful beat of the social searchlight. They had triumphed, coolly, bravely recovering themselves. She could do the same. Only there must be no more mistakes. She must be cool, smiling, brave.

Pressing her shaking hands together in their damp gloves, she repeated: "Brave."

And now she must go home. To her husband's



house. She must nerve herself to face her family and his, and fight. There must be no misstep now. The scandal could not have gone far. Twenty-four hours only had passed. Oh, if those hours could only be a dream! Her path was blocked by a passing drag, and, as she stood hesitating, an arc-light burst forth above her head. Starting, she realized that it was night. Seeing her distinction and hesitation, a drifting cabman increased his pace in answer to her gesture; but, before he could reach the curb, a frantically driven newspaper wagon cut in front of him. Bundles of late editions, damp from the press, were hurled to the sidewalk.


Starting back to avoid the heavy packages that rolled to her feet, Bertha Roth's eyes encountered a huge headline, and under it, in letters two inches high, she read her own name. The cabman threw open the half doors of the hansom.

"Where to, lady?" he said, bending down toward her, his little, ferret eyes blinking over her face.

Bertha Roth's frightened, desperate eyes lingered on those accusing headlines as she slowly entered the vehicle.

"The Bell-Haven Apartments," she answered, sinking back against the cushion and drawing down her veil.

The man on the box sent his lash cracking down on the harness. Through street after street the





horse plodded stolidly. Whenever a brilliantly lighted hotel or sign was passed, the driver would squint through a trap in the roof at the woman huddled in the corner. Finally the horse clumped into the court of a great apartment house, drawing up under its black iron awning. Mrs. Roth bent, whispering a question to the liveried doorman.

"Yes, madam, Mr. Whitsey is at home," answered the servant, assisting her to alight.

The cabman watched her disappear into the crimson-lamped hallway.

"It's paid me to trail her," he grinned, feeling for his pipe. "She's bolted to him, all right, all right."

And he sat, blowing smoke clouds into the frosty night, while high above three windows broke into electric radiance. New York is a small village, after all, to the socially prominent and their cabmen.

## CHAPTER XVI

**I** TOLD you to say I was not at home to any one. If it is some one from the press, tell them to go to my lawyers, Frost & Patrick."

"Beg pardon, Mr. Whitsey, that's what I've been telling them all afternoon. But the lady says she's not from the press; says she must see you on a matter of the most importance, sir."

"It is some trick of the reporters—I will see no one—you understand me? No one—send her away."

"Yes, sir," answered the servant, closing the door.

The man at the table bent again to his writing, and the room became silent save for the pen's scratching and the settle of logs from the darkness, where the red embers shone.

Drained of all color by the green-shaded lamp, the face at the table stood out from the dark clothes and dim surroundings, pallid, blue-shadowed, wax-like, curiously suggestive of a mask, the mask of one who has lived carefully and with taste, but hard. The life of a decade had etched

in upon it pleasure by pleasure, indulgence by indulgence, in little lines and shadows, the record of the easy years that had passed so smoothly for the successful, magnetic Jack Whitsey.

Popular with women, yet distinctly a man's man, much was predicted of the brilliant young lawyer when he emerged from the celebrated case that first focused him in the eyes of the metropolis.

If, as was hinted, his appearance among the legal forces that defended the traction magnate then under indictment was due more to his social gift at the dinner table of the defendant's wife than to legal proficiency, still the surprise of his eloquence and its undoubted effect on public opinion drew admiring attention which a fortunate verdict made lucrative.

Soon after this a still more fortunate marriage to a very wealthy woman, vaguely referred to as the widow of "some one from Pittsburg," opened the doors to a comfortable and gilded future, a future which dutifully evolved into an easy and gilded present.

True, his legal lamp after giving forth very bright radiance had flickered to a mere glimmer; still, it is not necessary for the rich to trim wicks, so the abandoning of his profession had been rather approved by Whitsey's friends. He was so much more dependable for the social engagements that

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now engrossed his time, engagements from which his wife began to be more and more eliminated.

Whitsey's friends, especially the women, began to speak of him as a man whose marriage was a mistake. He was so charming, so wittily original—his social gift was really a talent. His wife was vulgar, and with the years so increasingly ill-tempered and made-up, that his world excused his flirtations on the ground that he must be unhappy in his home, into the shadows of which it consigned Mrs. Whitsey.

Mrs. Whitsey, however, much to the surprise of society, refused to take her social *congé*, bursting again and again upon its startled vision in some blaze of vulgarity, anger or generosity, beating with lusty strokes upon the gates of its holy of holies until her hammering became part of the social concert. As clamor after all appeals to many ears not attuned to more delicate orchestration, she finally, to the utter surprise of everybody, became a recognized member of the social orchestra.

Not that Mrs. Whitsey and her husband were drawn nearer together by this. Their sets may be said to have overlapped, but never joined.

Mr. Whitsey's semi-bachelor apartments in the Bell-Haven were rarely honored by the presence of his wife, who contented herself with an imitation Trianon on Fifth Avenue, and a still more imitative border castle on the Hudson. These apart-

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ments were devoted to Jack's real life—as he would delicately imply to feminine ears—and society excused them on the ground that to him beauty and taste were necessities and not possible in any place that held his wife. Here were his collections of jade, miniatures, Chinese ivories and old Spanish vestments. Here, surrounded by the plunder of his foray into matrimony, he entertained the women who would not entertain his wife.

“Why not?” asked society. Jack had to have money. As to spending his wife's money, was she not spending her first husband's in border castles that offended the landscape of a peaceful river? So the scales balanced.

Thus the Bell-Haven saw more of Whitsey than did the Trianon, and the little dinners succeeded each other with increasing frequency, particularly after the return from Europe of the Damien Roths. It had been commonly reported, as youth and girl, that Jack Whitsey and Bertha De Frances had been engaged, although this was vigorously denied by Bertha's mother upon the ground that Jack was no match for the young heiress. What the heiress thought of the matter did not transpire.

An applauding world said that the Roths were made for each other. Damien was devoted to her. That this devotion should explode in the vulgar pyrotechnics of fistcuffs was more than the world, least of all the object of the attack, believed.

To the man at the table, reviewing the course of the affair, it all seemed preposterous, save for the bruise on his lip; a thing that seemed to have happened to some one else. That Damien Roth should obtrude such realities into his languid and innocent flirtation with Bertha was to Jack impossible, or rather, on second thought, probably the result of foreign society upon an American education.

Whitsey shifted his papers and frowned. Realities had rushed into his life. Still they could be adjusted. He belonged to the class which thinks that the difficulties of the Day of Judgment may be smoothed over by a little diplomatic explanation. As for the young fool, Roth, it was ridiculous to think of anything really serious from that quarter. When he woke up and got over "his head," he would send an apology. The families would bring him to his senses.

And Bertha—well, poor child, she had needed his sympathy, and he had given it to her. They were old friends with the memory of some twilight hours between them—hours which had really given him a right to offer a little unexpressed tenderness. The "might have been" has always a few rights that the actual must respect. It was hard on her; but it would blow over. As for himself, he supposed there would be a few bad moments with his wife, and after this, he must be

careful of realities. They had no place in such a carefully artificial life. Still——

The door opened. A woman entered, followed by the protesting servant.

"Send your man away," she said.

Even through the veils he could see her lips tremble. Whitsey motioned to the servant and they were alone.

"You were hiding from me."

Her voice was low, but with a note of revolting nerves.

"Bertha," he answered, springing to his feet, "I was not hiding. How could I know it was you—that you would come here?"

"You did not want me to come. You leave me alone to bear it all. Why have you not done something? They are cutting me. Bessie Morris turned me out of her house. They believe him. And the newspapers——"

She pressed her hands against her face and held them there. He placed her in a chair. His firm touch seemed to lay itself upon her hysteria, forcing it under control.

"Listen to me!" he said, quietly.

She lowered her hands, looking up at him with miserable, searching eyes.

"Far from deserting you and leaving you to bear this by yourself"—his voice was tender, his glance direct—"I have been trying to reach you all day.

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I telephoned 'Bellmore,' but they said you were not there—that you did not return from the Hunt Club. Why did you not go home? Where did you spend the night, Bertha?"

"I could not go home—I was afraid. You saw him—you know now what he is. Had he found me at home—I could not go home and wait for him, so I motored in to a hotel and sent for my maid."

"But this is folly, Bertha. Don't you see what color this gives to that mad action of Damien's? You must return home at once. To-morrow he will come to his senses."

"I am afraid to go home. I have tried all day—all day I have walked the park trying to go home. You don't know what I have suffered from him. No one knows."


"I have known you were very unhappy. I can always read you."

His voice was full of pity. After all, she was the girl of the dear hours of his youth.

"Yes, I knew that you did see. You were always kind. Oh, Jack, Jack, what I have suffered!"

"Dear," he murmured, kneeling beside her, "you promised once to trust me. Trust me now."

"I told him," she began, speaking from behind her hands, her voice a weary monotone, "I told him about you before we were married. I loved him and wanted no secrets from him. He pretended





not to care; but, after we were married, I found he did care.

"He was frantic with jealousy of every one I met, every one I spoke to; but of you most of all. Of you always. When the morphine has him, he is mad. He came back to this country that he might see us together—that he might trap us in something. He forced me to attend your dinners that he might watch us to discover if I had lied. He thought I was guilty, and fed himself upon the sight of us together that he might catch a look, a touch, that would justify his suspicions.

"My life! Jack, my life!" she exclaimed, dropping her hands with a shudder. "I have awakened in the night to find him bent over me, his ear to my lips to hear if in my sleep I murmured your name. There is no drunken violence, no insane abuse to which he has not stooped to force me to confess a lie.

"The day of the ball there was a terrible scene. My little dog, the little dog that I had before I was married, ran across the lawn. He saw it and shot it dead from the window, telling me he would do the same to you. That night, when you came unexpectedly to the ball and he heard you were there, he left me without a word. When the crashes came from the smoking-room I thought he had killed you and ran in. And now all these people shut their doors to me, judging me, without waiting, from the

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action of a man insane with drugs. They drive me from their houses; they pillory me as guilty, and to prove my innocence, I must go back to this drug-crazed man of whom I am in terror."


"You need not go back. Your father will protect you."

"My father?" she laughed. "His investments and Damien's are interwoven. He will not listen to me. He prefers not to believe me. I did appeal to him. He sent me a bunch of flowers and went to Lakewood. Jack, I am through. I cannot, I will not, go back. What shall I do, Jack?"

She lay against the cushions, fragile, beautiful in her pale abandon. She was again the girl of those dear hours and he the man he was. He put his arms about her and kissed her.

"Bertha, trust me," he said.

Her eyes closed with a weary sigh—the sigh of one who though driven, had found rest.



## CHAPTER XVII

**H**OW tiresome that Monsieur Charles is not at liberty! Shall I have to wait long? Did you tell him that it was I?"

"Yes, Madam Morris, and he said he would be disengaged in five minutes. He works now upon the head of a lady who goes to a funeral—a *coiffure de consolation*. In the presence of such grief, madam will wait, I am sure." And the maid, with an apologetic smile, removed the marabou and sables that draped the ample form of Mrs. Jim Morris.

With a grunt of dismissal that lady seated herself and the curtains of the tiny, delicately decorated dressing room closed. Monsieur Charles, hairdresser to society, was evidently busy to-day in his pretty little house on Fifty-eighth Street.

"Sorry to detain you, Bessie"—the voice of Mrs. Wellas Rolford came from an adjoining apartment—"but I am off to a funeral in the country."

"Oh, that is you, Alice?" answered Mrs. Jim. "I presume you are going out to the Rickfords'."

"Yes, poor Rick! Monsieur," addressing an unseen ministrant, "is not that shade of red a trifle bright—almost too frivolous for the occasion?"

"No, madame," replied a soft, authoritative voice. "Madame's costume will of a necessity be of the subdued, so madame's hair may be more of the brilliant. To the house of grief madame brings sorrow in her costume, hope in her *coiffure*."

The tinkling of bottles under deft fingers mingled with Mrs. Rolford's laughter.

"Ah," continued the voice, "how often have I said to madame that a lady's hair is but part of her costume, to be changed with her toilet. How terrible to see ladies of the gowns elaborate and with the hair raw, natural, fresh from the hands of the good God." (An audible shudder of horror.) "With each new toilet—hair to match. Superb!"

Mrs. Rolford laughed again.

"Ah, you may laugh, madame, but there are those who do not laugh. The dear Madame Whitsey said to me yesterday to change her hair to a color to indicate temporary widowhood."

The ladies on both sides of the partition became merry.

"Really, Bessie," Mrs. Rolford exclaimed, "the Whitsey woman has risen to her opportunities. She convulsed us at the Mason-Waterfords'

dinner last night by describing Jack as her husband on a vacation. Anna West asked if she continued his salary, and she answered that he always had been on a commission basis. Featherway, the architect who built her country home, was there. You should have seen his attempt to look unconcerned. Every one is asking her about now, she is such fun."

"I think her disgusting," returned Mrs. Morris; "but I'll ask her out to Hempstead. I was in a quandary what to have for my Thanksgiving Day house party. She can stay over for the Bishop's visit. He is very anxious to finish the north transept. I understand the subscriptions have fallen away since his anti-temperance speech. How ridiculous to hold the poor Bishop responsible for what he says in public! Where do you think Jack and Bertha are?"

"No one knows. Perfectly silly for them to vanish in this fashion. Think of running away just because they are in love."

"Why do you suppose she did it?" asked Mrs. Morris.

"My dear, Bertha is and always was romantic. Think of bolting with such a shopworn article as Jack Whitsey!"

"They say that Damien is prostrated," said Mrs. Morris. "The poor boy, what must he think of women?"

"Her family are furious," rejoined Mrs. Rolford. "They speak of trusteeing her estate. There is some clause in her mother's will that gives them the power. They are determined that Jack Whitsey shall not touch a cent."

"Has Damien applied for a divorce?"

"I understand that he intends doing so at once. What a fool Bertha is!"

"What a fool any woman is to elope, except through the divorce court."

A rustle betokened that Mrs. Rolford was rising.

"Good-bye, Bessie! I must be off to the Grand Central. There is a special car to the family chapel at Garrison's. I trust they have been careful of the liquors. I dislike to see pall-bearers fall into the grave. It seems indecorous."

A clash of curtain rings, the echo of a laugh and the lady was gone.

That afternoon, Bessie Morris, enthroned in her C-spring barouche, rolled majestically up the avenue and through the gates of the Whitsey residence. That Mrs. Whitsey was not hiding her grief from the eyes of society was attested as soon as the visitor entered the florid splendors of what her hostess termed the "Florentine tea room."

"To be sure, I'll go," she cried, after her guest had explained the object of her first visit. "I like

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the Bishop. He's a walking promise that society has a friend to pass it into heaven."

"Your anxiety about society does you credit. It shows that you think of others than yourself."

Bessie Morris surveyed the salver, presented by a gaudily upholstered human automaton, as though it held the food of strange animals deserving curiosity.

"What are those sandwiches?" she inquired.

"Caviare, madame," answered the footman, enjoying the insult to his mistress behind his servitor's mask.

"You'll find them all right." Mrs. Whitsey took several of them in her ample hand. "The Bishop always cleans the plate with his 'high-ball.' Will you have one?"

"I never drink them," replied Mrs. Morris.

The woman was insufferable and, after all, Sherry's but a short distance.

"I do not think," she added, coldly, "the Bishop would like us to discuss what he does. He is my friend."

"And mine, too. He's every one's friend; but he only keeps an engagement book for the rich or the labor unions."

The temporary widow laughed boisterously, her face mottling scarlet.

"Poor Jack!" thought Mrs. Jim. "What horrors the poor have to suffer! I wouldn't have

her out to Hempstead if I could get the acting bears or some good dancer."

"I should offer you my sympathy," she said aloud. "Your husband was my friend."

Mrs. Whitsey half closed her eyes and fingered the cascades of pearls that flowered down her bosom.

"Excuse me," she replied, "but I know why you have invited me to your house party. I'll talk about my husband when there is a crowd. Until then I won't waste anything."

"I meant it in kindness," said Mrs. Jim, rising. "You see I knew them both. Jack's so handsome, polished and popular, and Bertha so young, so pretty, so refined."

"Was she all that? Well, well, we old women have had our good times, too, haven't we, Mrs. Morris?"

"Dreadful creature!" thought Mrs. Jim, as her footman drew the fur carriage robes about her. "But she's cheaper than the bears and ought to cut up well at bridge. Sherry's, Wardes!"

The woman she had just left watched the equipage roll out through her gates.

"Well," she murmured, "with friends like you, and a lover like Jack, God pity her, however pretty and young!"

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## CHAPTER XVIII

**M**ADAME will dine?"

"Yes, Giuseppe, here, on the terrace."

"And monsieur also?"

"My husband returns by the late boat from Sala. Lay his plate also."

"Yes, Madame Bellamy."

Bertha Roth went to the terrace wall. Below, the hillside sank, one white flutter of magnolia blossoms, to the waters of the Lake of Como, glittering under the soft brilliancy of an Italian moon. Across the water, where the mountains dipped to the junction of the Lake of Lecco, the lights of Bellagio twinkled brightly against the deep purples and blacks of the hills.

A breeze wafted up to her, sweet from thousands of roses, and pulsing with the love songs of nightingales. She remained motionless, listening to the sounds that betokened the laying of the meal behind her. The servant finished his labors by placing a silver drinking stand by the table and crunching bottles into its ice-packed compartments.

Bertha turned. "Are you certain that the wine

will be of the correct temperature?" she said in French. "The last time monsieur was displeased."


"Yes, madame."

"And you will be careful to pass the port from left to right? Do not forget that. My husband has asked me to obtain another butler. No, I will not discharge you"—in answer to a torrent of pleadings in French—"but Monsieur Bellamy, my husband, desires that his service be perfect. See that there is no mistake in the salad. There was too much cognac in the last."

"Yes, Madame Bellamy," replied the man.

Bertha walked to the parapet and looked out on a world drenched in moonlight. A night breeze, fresh from the water and heavy with the odors of dewy flowers, lifted the soft hair from her forehead. Away where the black shadows of the mountains lay on the bright mirror of the lake a line of fire sparks marked the steamer from Sala as it drew nearer. She watched them for a while; then listlessly returned to the table, scanning its appointments.

Drawing a rose from among its decorations, she put it in her hair, stood a moment in thought, then drew it out, and with a shrug, threw it to the pavement. Then she crossed again to the wall of the terrace and stood watching the growing lights of the little steamer. Behind her the drawing-room windows began to glow. Steps came and



went, accompanied by the chink of glass or silver. At last the closing of the jalousies told her she was alone and she sank into a wicker chair, elbows on knees, face buried in her hands, and so remained until an approaching bustle heralded her lover's return. The jalousies were thrown open and he came upon the terrace followed by a servant with silver candelabra.

"Oh, Jack!" she exclaimed, rising gaily, "you are just in time."

"We dine out here again? Delightful!" he answered, kissing her.


"How is the pigeon shoot getting on?" she inquired, as they seated themselves at the softly lighted table.

Her voice, bright with welcome, had no suggestion of the silent watcher.

"Jolly enough!" he answered, after a critical survey of the *hors d'œuvres* which the anxious servant held toward him. "You know, I was surprised to see Dick Carrington."

"Was Dick Carrington there?"

"Yes. One would not have thought to see a shot like Dick at such a little match; but he said that he and his sister were at Tremezzo, so he motored over. He was very glad to see me; but had to leave to pick up his sister at Villa d'Este. They are staying to-night at Promonotogo. What is the matter? You are not eating, Bertha."



"Nothing is the matter."

He looked at her with an impatient expression, which faded on the re-entrance of the servant with the soup.

"Did you motor to-day?" he inquired.

"No, there is something wrong with the machine."

"That's the nuisance of having only one car. We must send to Milan for another. It is ridiculous having only one between us."

"But, Jack, we are going to leave here if we can sublet the villa."

"Leave here? Why, the season's only just begun."

The servant passed into the house.

"That is the reason," she replied quietly. "You met Dick Carrington to-day. His sister is at Promonotogo. She was my room-mate at school."


Whitsey stifled a sigh.

"I had forgotten. Pardon me."

Suddenly he brightened.

"Do you know what I have been thinking?" he said. "It is that we should charter a yacht and drift down the Sicilies to Algiers. Think of Algiers under this moon. Nothing to annoy one on a yacht."

"Jack"—she pushed aside her plate and bent forward over the table, "I should love to, dear; but you remember what difficulties I am under. I



can scarcely get enough money from the estate to go on here."

"But the attempt to trustee your income is only a temporary thing. It has not a legal leg to stand on. That clause in your mother's will won't hold water."

"I know, Jack"—her voice was gently explanatory, the tone one would use to a fretful child—"but until a decision is arrived at we shall be in difficulties and we must be careful."

"Don't let us discuss finance during dinner," answered the man.

The servant returned and the meal proceeded, Bertha attempting to give it an easy air; but Whitsey was indifferent, a cold irritation visible in his manner. Faintly over the water came the chime of bells marking the hour. The nightingale wooed the rose in a world of romance; but here on the terrace two people sat dining, oblivious of their surroundings, the woman watching the man in the light of the pink-shaded candles.

The meal over, they seated themselves in deep lounge chairs, gazing over the lake, Jack smoking, his companion nervously draping and redraping her shoulder scarf.

"Dear," she said, at length, "I am sorry if I have displeased you. Could I have helped it, Jack?"

"That is just it, Bertha." The red stub of his

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cigarette shot circling into the night. "I feel like a cad. That is one of the reasons I hate the sound of the word money. Close my eyes as I will, it is your money that pays everything. Every hour of the day I am made to feel it in some manner. Don't mistake me! You try to be tactful; you are tactful, and it is just that damn tactfulness that hurts most. I could be the paid husband; but to be your——"

"Why don't you say the paid lover?" said the woman.

He turned and looked at her.

"I did not mean that"—with a frightened catch in her voice—"Jack, I did not mean that! But we are at such dreadful cross-purposes—all the more dreadful that we never speak of them. This tact between us has grown into a wall, severing us, shutting our lives away from each other. Oh, dear, why not be honest with each other?"

"Well then, we'll have to admit that our lives are a mess to be hidden out of sight. We are no worse than dozens of our friends, only more rash, more public."

"I have always feared this moment; but we must face it. We cannot go on like this."

"How can we go on?"

"Not as we are, hiding here in Italy, covering our eyes to the truth."

"What truth?"

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"That your wife means every word when she says that she will never divorce you."

"What can we do?"


"Fight." She rose. "We must fight. How can we sit here supinely, while the hideous fact remains that we are outcasts? Jack, Jack, you don't know, you can't realize, what it means to a woman to be an outcast."

"My dear," he said, knocking the ashes from another cigarette, "there are a number of theoretical things that might be done, but theory is one thing, and a determined woman with a huge bank account another. Nothing will help us but time; and until it does we must, ridiculous as it is, hide. That is why I say let us go yachting."

"Impossible! I am waiting for a draft from Paris to pay the month's expenses."

"My dear Bertha, I am so tired of the word expenses. It is bad enough to be buried here, without bickering like a couple in a Harlem flat. I don't desire to be discourteous, but it bores me. If it will help the domestic problem, I am perfectly willing to live like Diogenes in a tub, provided it is not borrowed for the family washing. Retrench by all means; but please do not let us discuss it."

"Apparently," said her weary voice from the darkness, "the subject is unfortunate. We will not discuss it. There is another subject that probably it would be as well to discuss."



"What is it?"

"Whether you are tired of this—of me."


He looked at her. Merely the shimmer of her white gown was visible. Mr. Whitsey's day had been trying. The smooth stream of his life had suddenly become stormy, difficult, and he resented it with the anger of a selfish man; but he was a gentleman—he did not retort, he left her. From the terrace Bertha watched the lamps of his auto on their way to Promonotogo and the Carringtons.

Presently the servant entered.

"You may leave the table till morning, Giuseppe. Tell my maid she need not sit up for me. Lock the gates. Monsieur will not return to-night."

The servant left. From lower stories came the bang of closing shutters. Bertha crossed over to the silver liquor stand by the table.

"What else is there now?" she said. "What else?"





## CHAPTER XIX

**W**HITSEY did not return for three days, leaving Bertha ample time for reflection. Was this the stuff that dreams were made of? She had times of vision, when she could fairly see into the depths of her character. She did not try to deceive herself. She was not the victim of any villainy. Cowardice drove her to Whitsey's apartment that night. And she had stayed, yielded to the pressure of his sympathy.

Jack was sympathetic. It was the most serviceable article of his stock in trade. As she fed his beauty sense he loved her. For a while they were happy. There had been hours of such perfect beauty, such communion of spirit, that she told herself, come what might, they paid for all. But they had not paid. Slowly, day by day, she discovered that they were counterfeit, rejected at the counter of inexorable Time. She had been the dupe of his self-deception. A perfect piece of jade would have awakened in his eyes the same light that shone for her.

Gradually she came to detect in his manner the

perfect art of loving, the art that conceals itself. His passion was always articulate, his answers the right answers. He knew her moods and how to handle them by experience drawn from a thousand similar occurrences. She was a game, intricate, interesting, that some day he would understand too thoroughly to play. And to her horror she found that she was beginning to know him. Close her eyes to it as she would, the truth could not be shut out. She had lost everything for a man she did not love. Love would have blinded her to his selfishness, true legacy from the lazy years, to the second-hand quality of his emotions, to the truth as to his regard for her. She was a decoration merely, and one that in his heart he regarded as too expensive.


They had been met on their arrival in Paris by the news that her family had instituted proceedings to enjoin the payment of her income. This was annoying, but nothing more. They were both liberally supplied with ready money, and the months in the Austrian Tyrol were unclouded by any of the annoying financial difficulties that now bristled in their path.

Both of them utterly unused to consider the question of money, the perplexities appearing as their supply drained away were a new aggravation of fate. Whitsey, selfish, indolent, with the unobtrusive egotism of the man of the world, found

these difficulties insupportable, turning their romance into something cheap, common, that had come out of his hard-pinched youth to plague him. His mind constantly reverted to the prodigal, luxurious years when his wife's wealth had been a golden reservoir, noiselessly irrigating and making luxuriant his life.

But now no refreshing streams of money flowed, and, bit by bit, his showy qualities, hospitality, prodigality, generosity, were dying away, leaving the sterile selfishness of his nature naked to his companion's eyes. He was careful of her feelings when she did not prick him too far, but he was a man whose life profession had been the society of many women, and to be shut up with a single one on a perpetual, parsimonious honeymoon fretted him to outbursts of petulant anger gracefully repented of, or fits of desertion beautifully apologized for.

The anger had frightened Bertha and the desertions terrified her. But finally she was neither frightened nor terrified, resigning herself to a hopeless drifting, a dumb waiting on fate. She was down, and day by day, under the benumbing influence of his indifference, she lost the will to struggle. There was not even the solace of a little fire of love to cheer the cold loneliness of her banishment from her kind. She had sought the protection of the lover of her youth; but it was the



husband of the "woman from Pittsburg" who was her companion. So she supervised his meals and his house and struggled as best her inexperience could with the debts and difficulties of their situation, spending hours at her desk over the troubled accounts, or else in the garden of their villa, killing the time with novels.

She dared not go out. Cadanebabbia was beginning to fill with the fashion of the Continent, among which in former times she had numbered friends. An extended lease, due to her ignorance of Italian law, tied them to the villa. Lonely, she drifted through leaden days. No longer with fierce intensity did she strive to justify herself. Even the recollection of her husband became softened. Sometimes she asked herself if she had been to blame in not making some effort against the habit that possessed him. What kind of a man was he before the drug transformed him? And what was the fatal defect in her character that attracted weak men to her?

Gradually she lost all hope of ever marrying Whitsey and thereby creeping back into semi-recognition. Each time he left her, she expected it would be the last; but he had his standard and, though weary, it was more of the penury of their life than of her. Any sudden augmentation of their income would have instantly augmented his enjoyment of her society.

Bertha accepted the ruin of her life with a quiet indifference that masked her despair. She had failed and must resign herself to the scrap heap along with thousands of others such as she. She did not try to deceive herself as to her position, nor as to her lover's. Indeed, there was a certain pleasure to be found in the sacrifice of her property to keep him going. It differentiated her, in a measure, from the mistresses of other men. She did it with her eyes open as a duty that she would continue as long as possible. After that—well, she did not try to look into the future, for there was no future.

A fierce shrinking from observation confined her to the villa. She was not a woman of natural resources—nothing in her former life had tended to develop these—but there was an external resource always at hand with its suggestion of compensation and oblivion, and against which she realized that she must struggle desperately if she would save herself from the final horrors of her degradation. Accustomed as a child to liquors on the table, trained as a *débutante* to the smiling endurance of long dinners with their varying wines, as a married woman the set with which she mingled placed no restrictions of time or place upon drinking, regarding liquor as the oil which made the great social machine run smoothly.

Still she had never felt the slightest inclination

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towards it. The tendencies of certain acknowledged leaders of her set made her shrink with a secret disgust that rose rather from a delicacy of mind and fastidiousness of habit than from the moral principles her mother had instructed her governess to instil. It was not until her discovery that Whitsey's enjoyment of dining was marred if his companion did not drink with him, that she began to take wine regularly. Jack was a social nature, and the social pleasures were made for sharing. Besides, conversation was rendered easier—the essence of gaiety lay in a little choice wine. Oh, not too much! Nothing was more disgusting than a woman under the influence of liquor, but a little made her gay—the slight blush was becoming, and the added brilliancy of her eyes was a thing that such a connoisseur as Jack could gaze at with rapture for hours. So, unthinkingly and to please him, to smooth the crumpled rose-leaf that disturbed those days of love, she drank. Later, amid the ashes of past joys, she was constantly tempted to remember that there was at hand one distraction, one means of closing the shutters on the wan light of failure that mercilessly penetrated every crevice of her soul.

Whitsey returned from Promonotogo full of apologies. The Carringtons had friends with them, old acquaintances. It was really impossible to get away. Had she heard from New York?

Infamous that her father blocked her lawyers' attempts to secure her an adequate income! She must be dull here. Suppose they ran up to Milan for the carnival? The idea of Milan did not appeal to Bertha. So many Americans were sure to be there. Besides, in her growing lethargy, her tendency was to drift with the least effort. She knew that to keep her lover by her side she must amuse him, but she lacked the ambition. The sight of the man tired her. She was more contented when he was away.

The expenses were becoming more and more serious. There was no use consulting Jack. Whatever practicality had been in his character had long since disappeared. And she likewise had no notions of economy. So at length she was confronted with the disagreeable prospect of an absolute lack of ready money. She avoided speaking of this to her lover as long as possible; but, finally, under pressure of necessity, forced herself to the interview. Jack proved indifferent. He also was beginning to drift, spending hours in bed or in a dressing robe, smoking and reading decadent novels. The automobile was given up and the renting of the lower floor of the villa placed in the hands of an agent. Bertha dreaded the closer contact with Jack that would come with the occupancy of a tenant; but her fear proved groundless. The floor remained unrented.

The season passed and the sharp cold of the Italian winter filled Jack with sarcastic complaints and memories of the pleasant climates of Palm Beach and the Riviera. He idled his days in a huddle of furs, crouched over a charcoal foot-stove, surrounded by the butts of endless cigarettes. Bertha kept to her room, never rising till noon, the liquor glass often by her bedside. They met at dinner, to which he would bring his novel, propping it up against his decanter and rarely exchanging more than the commonplaces.

Winter passed and the spring began to send a trickle of tourists down from the lakes of Switzerland. Suddenly, to Bertha's surprise, Jack began to take an interest in life. He went out more, new clothes came from London, his whole air brightened and his conversation became gayer. She concluded that he had secured a loan, regarding the source of which she did not care to inform herself. Possibly some wandering friend of former days had supplied him.

She took little interest in his movements. That she bored him she was aware, and so saw as little as possible of him. One morning, half awake, the green branches against the deep blue of the sky reminded her of her bedroom window as it had looked when she was a girl. Covering her face with her hands she buried it in the pillow with long animal whimperings. After a while her self-

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control returned; but the outburst frightened her. She resolved to take more exercise.

Some hours later she stood on a little circle of rock, looking over the sunny, sparkling lake. The warm, odorous spring wind suggested the awakening life of the world. Unclouded sunlight enveloped mountains and lakes in a bath of the purest translucent radiancy. Against the hillsides, smoked over with the faint gray of olive trees, villas and villages shone with vivid intensity. How beautiful it was! How mistaken she had been in thinking that all was lost to her! She had been at fault. Jack must have depths in his nature that only waited for a real effort from her to give up unlooked-for jewels of love and endeavor. The air was a bath of gold, renewing hope and confidence.

Out on the lake white and scarlet sails slanted, driving before an oncoming wind. Much was to be done. One thing was certain: They must go home to America, the land of effort. Italy was sapping all vigor out of their lives. The breeze reached her, stirring the sharp-curved olive leaves above her head into a moving gray-green lattice against the deep cobalt of the sky. He was weak; but then had she shown any strength?

By what right did she take an attitude of censure? He, after his way, was kind. Might he not draw energy from her, if once she could find

it in herself? Anyway, they must go home. This land of sunshine and blue was not for those who would rebuild their lives.

Below her, where the road to Menaggio curves dipping toward Cadanebabbia, a group of mules laden with water casks and fagots were scattering before the siren warning of an oncoming automobile. They were not quick enough, however, and the car rounded the curve and paused. Feminine laughter came up to her, and in the car she recognized Whitsey with another man and three women. The right of way was cleared and the car shrilled away to Menaggio. She turned and retraced her steps to the villa. She could not reproach him for seeking the society she denied him. Well, that would change now. The alteration of her attitude would be shown by the resumption of the little attentions that had drifted from her in the cold, stale familiarity of their existence.

Crossing an outlying wheat field of the estate, she was attracted by the wild tulips and began to gather them. With her arms full of the blood-colored flowers she entered the garden. The foam bows of the fountain glittered up from its embanking roses and cactus blossoms.

Over low clumps of laurel the little villa, gay with striped awnings and flower-filled window boxes, stood in vivid white contrast to its background of intense blue lake and sky. What a toy

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of pleasure it was! What a nest for loving it could be!

But she wanted home—the raw, vigorous air of America. The stern energy of its cold spring called her across the sea from sunny, lazy Italy.

She entered the open window of the drawing-room. To the man, waiting in the cool darkness, it seemed as if the garden had suddenly yielded up its spirit. Framed in the window against a background of sun-dappled leaves, her hair tossed by the wind, she was a picture of blended tints and young dryad curves. Like the scarlet flowers in her arms, she seemed the result of some rare and exquisite thought of Nature, delicate, fragile, yet beautifully alive.

For a moment she stood in surprise; then advanced with the easy assurance of a well-bred woman.

“I am Mrs. Bellamy,” she explained

He rose and bowed.

“And I, madam, am the American Consul at Milan. I called in reference to your husband’s trouble with the authorities.”

He proffered her a card.

“Trouble with the authorities?”

“Yes, Mrs. Bellamy. Nothing of importance. An accident in which his car injured a child at Tremezzo. Oh, nothing serious, I assure you. I happened to be standing on the steps of the ‘Belle-

View' and saw it. So, personally and officially, I have to adjust the matter. Your husband insisted on being so generous as to awaken the rapacious Italian nature. We had some little difficulty; but it is adjusted, and I have called to so inform Mr. Bellamy."

A hundred conjectures flitted through Bertha's mind as to where Jack had borrowed the money.

"It is most kind of you," she said. "I am so sorry, my husband will not be at home until evening. It is very unfortunate that he is not here in person to thank you. However, he will call on you to-morrow, Mr.—" with a glance at his card—"Alexander."

"Unfortunately, this is my last official act. I leave for America to-night. Will you make my adieus to your husband?"

Some minutes later Alexander walked out of the villa gates, his thoughts busy with this woman who had come into his life from a sunny garden, her arms full of scarlet flowers.

That night Bertha made a brilliant toilet. She knew Jack's taste, and, as she stood at the mirror, fastening her pearl collar, she was surprised at the transformation her purpose had made in her beauty. The delicate gown, with the long lines and unerring sweep of the artist's hand, accentuated and clung to the slender curves of her figure in smoke-grey mist, touched here and there with

the high flash of copper and silver spangles. The complicated dressing of her hair, also a concession to her lover's exotic tendencies, framed the pure, fine distinction of her face in deep, wavy, golden brown, while the faint blue shadows under her eyes emphasized their liquid brilliancy and depth.

Fastening a scarlet flower in her hair, she descended to the terrace and dressed the supper table with flowers of her own plucking. And here beside a table softly glowing with shaded candles and crimson tulips her lover found her, much to his surprise. That the experiment was a success, Bertha told herself, as, two hours later, they lingered over their liquors. Jack was exerting himself and she, resolutely closing her eyes to the familiarity of method, met him in his own mood. And truly he was in his element at dinner. His charm of manner was a fine art. There must be depths of feeling behind such a perfect show of it. What a shame it was that such brilliancy and wit were not exerted in the pursuit of his profession!

"Yes, Alexander is a good fellow," Jack said.

How handsome he looked in the candle light! No wonder women had loved him! Was it his fault they had spoiled him?

"Made a big stir at home," he continued. "A radical, you know, in his party. They sent him

abroad to bury him. Got too big for them; but he has resigned and gone home. They say he intends to run for Governor; but the administration is down on him. He will never be nominated. Rather clever his going abroad till the gang tied themselves in a knot. He does not share their mistakes."

"He does not look like a man who would try to avoid sharing mistakes," said Bertha.

"You never can tell about politicians."

Jack leaned back in content, blowing his cigarette smoke into the still air.

"He is an agitator who means to put his agitation into practice. At least so Dick Carrington says. I have a letter from him somewhere. Would you like to see it?"

He began feeling in the pockets of his dinner jacket.

"No, I don't know what I did with it," he went on. "I am so careless with letters. Always carrying them around. I dislike to destroy a letter. Oh, yes, here it is!" And he threw a crumpled note across the table.

Bertha picked it up and bent toward the candelabra. He felt a thrill of pleasure at the way the rose lights played over the delicate modeling of her face and shoulders and glinted in the coils of her hair.

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*"Dear Jack," she read in a sprawling, feminine hand, "I send the five thousand by cable to Milan. I'll be in Paris in three weeks from to-day.*

*Ella Whitsey."*

Bertha rose, handed the letter back to him, and, standing cold, beautiful and still, looked at him.

"I—I gave you that by mistake," he stammered. "I did not mean you to see it."

"You may go," said Bertha Roth.

He looked at her with shamed, miserable eyes.

"You may go," she repeated. "This house is mine. You have no right in it."

He rose, stood a few moments in indecision, glanced at her again and left her. She did not move until the clang of the gate told her he had gone; then tried to pour herself a glass of wine. The liquor spilled over her shaking hand. She refilled the glass and drained it. Then another and another.

## CHAPTER XX

**O**H, Cyrus, this ship pitches!" Mrs. Blut gazed in piteous reproach at her husband.

"Nonsense, my dear Lavinia! It says in the prospectus that these five-day boats are too large to pitch."

And Cyrus Blut (Blut Iron Works, Pittsburg) turned with much creaking of starched linen to a survey of the multitude of small, candle-lit tables that, surrounded by the autumnal return flow of Americans, filled the great dining-salon of the "Princessen von Saxe-Teschen," three days out from Cherbourg.

Mr. Blut was one of those men to be seen in the lifts of gorgeous, torrid hotels, men belligerently at home in their evening clothes, their faces shining with sleek, conscious assurance as from the Saturday night tub with brown soap of their not too distant past; men who never deign to speak of the fashionably prominent except by the most abbreviated of their christened names. He and his good wife were social missiles of the sort that



Pittsburg discharges against the walls of society as from a golden catapult.

"Here come Natalie Van Klean and her husband," announced the male Blut. "Isn't she pale? I wonder why Van don't make her rouge? You'd think they'd dine in her aunt's suite."


"Who's her aunt?" inquired his consort, her attention distracted from the slight sway of the table by the Van Klean toilet.

"Mrs. Jim Morris. She has the royal suite. Natalie was a Ferrand. She married Van a year ago. They've been motoring in Germany. Don't you remember? We saw them at Rumpelmeyer's tea-room when we were in Paris."

"Did we? Oh, yes; Ella Whitsey was with them and pretended not to recognize me, when I was one of those who blackballed her for the 'Pittsburg Ladies' Bridge Club.' She never knew it, of course, as I was her sponsor. How that vulgar thing can get on the way she has, is beyond me."

And Mrs. Blut settled herself into her chins and assumed a queenly attitude for the waiter's benefit.

"Her marrying Jack Whitsey did it," answered her husband, polishing the gleaming result of his manicure's labors with a serviette. "I thought she'd drop out when he bolted with Bertha Roth; but now he's returned to her, Ella has everything her own way. But I guess Jack's sorry he didn't



stay with Bertha since Damien died and left her all that money."

"Don't you think it strange that Damien should have divorced her and then made a will in her favor? I think he was crazy."

"Perhaps he was; but they'll have hard work to prove it, though he did die of an over-dose of morphine. Anyway, Bertha's got a lot of money now, and for four years, ever since Jack left her, she has been in London."

"How can English society put up with a woman like her?" exclaimed Mrs. Blut, pausing to make an elaborate bow to a brightly painted female who was in the act of seating herself at the Van Klean table.

"Where did you meet Beatrice Went?" whispered her delighted and ducking husband.

"Oh, last night she sent her maid to ask if my opal collar was a design of Ratiford's, and I went and told her myself."

"Well, I wouldn't notice her," remarked her lord, recoiling from the frigid Went stare. "She's only a dealer in second-hand husbands, anyway," and he attacked his "*Coup Jacques*" as though it were the lady in question.


"Did you ever see Bertha Roth?" inquired his helpmate.

"No, she doesn't go out with Americans. They know too much about her. But Jimmy Wither-

spindle, who knows Lord Dalmally, told me that the way she got taken up in London was by some one he called an exalted personage seeing her in the line at the Kreuzbrunner Spring, and, remembering that she had been presented to him as a débutante, he sent his adjutant to say he would meet her. And then—well, all Marienbad talked about it; although the Crown Princess of Saxe-Calerne did have her to play for her at the Hotel Weimar. Still you know the Crown Princess is not exactly a certificate of character."

"Bertha went with her to London; but even there she isn't of the right set, you know, although not quite in the wrong one. More of the glitter than the gold, you know—all kind of stories about her, but nothing very definite. Hurry up with your dessert so as to be ready when the Van Kleans go to the promenade deck. Perhaps Beatrice didn't see us when we bowed. Come on hurry up! We'll try again."

As the lady referred to was likely after dinner to recognize far more people than the occasion demanded, her companions judiciously prevailed upon her to seek the seclusion of her cabin. The quest of the Bluts proving futile, they separated and the husband found himself leaning upon the rail of the upper smoking-salon, watching Mr. Van Klean as he lounged in the lower room devoted to the smokers and card players.



The Pittsburger's cogitations as to the thickness of the social ice were interrupted by an officer of the ship who ran down the stairway and affixed a notice to the bulletin-board, making as he did so an announcement inaudible from a distance, but evidently of an exciting tenor; for in a moment he was hidden by the crowd that streamed from all parts of the smoking-room.

"What has happened?" asked Blut, as the officer repassed him on his way to the general salon.

"Marconi wireless from Sandy Hook. Barnard Alexander captures the convention and is nominated for Governor of New York State."

"My God!" cried Blut. "That will kill the market. It's not true. It can't be."

He rushed down the steps to the humming crowd about the bulletin in time to hear Jimmy Van Klean remark:

"Are the people of this country mad?"

"Just as things were picking up, too," answered Blut.

"It is the greatest surprise of politics," Van Klean went on. "He was not even mentioned. What can have happened?"

"The damned renegade!" shouted a man. "He left our party when he did not get the nomination two years ago on his return from Italy. Pretends to be independent."

"He's no renegade," broke in a youthful voice,

angrily. "I tell you he's the hope of the nation. We know what the President says he'll do; but look at what Alexander *has* done as mayor—look at his record in the House. He's not of one party or the other. He's of the people."

His voice was drowned in a protesting cry from the well-dressed crush about the board. A whirl of excited discussion boiled up and swept over the crowded room—dashed along the decks—flowed into the private salons, from which men in evening dress ran to besiege the wireless telegraph office with outgoing messages. It poured down into the hold where, in the scorch and flare, half-naked stokers cheered and wrung each other's hands.

The noise of it penetrated to the guarded, private suite of a lady who sent her maid to ascertain the cause of the excitement. The woman gone, Bertha Roth—"Mrs. Leinster" on the ship's register—returned to the perusal of the lawyer's papers preparatory to an understanding of the celebrated case that brought her to the United States.

Even under the shaded lights by her desk, the four years since her dismissal of Whitsey revealed their traces. Her beauty was more vivid than ever; but the soft, poetic suggestion that had been its distinguishing trait was changed into a brilliancy which suggested the high polish of a hard surface, as though the jewel of her loveliness had been cut into a thousand gleaming facets by the

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deft hand of experience. A beautiful woman—an exquisite thing of flesh and blood—but as artificial as the web-like laces of her sweeping negligee.

The throb of the screw annoyed her and she pushed aside the papers. The sustained effort necessary to their mastery was impossible. This visit to America was a bore. She detested America and Americans. They were crude, new, covered with the finger-marks of their maker. All she desired of them was to be left alone in peace—to enjoy a society that asked of her only beauty and charm. But they would not do so. She was pursued by American curiosity and she well knew what treasures of scandal rewarded its seeking.

Nor could the scandal be said to be entirely confined to the gregarious of her own country. London society of a certain sort was beginning to raise a tolerant English eyebrow—a mere preliminary flexure of the muscles, but visible to sharp journalistic eyes. Really the fair cosmopolitan was taking too much advantage of the constant inclusion of her name on the list of the house parties to meet an exalted person. Oh, there had been talk of a certain young equerry of the personage being out of favor, and, thereafter, her name was on the lists no more. Then the Princess of Saxe-Calerne had dropped her because a celebrated artist had dined with her a little too often. Nothing wrong; only the artist was known to be the


Princess's property. And—oh, well, it were better after all if the beautiful Bertha took her departure. It would give her reputation a chance for a little recuperative rest. It was really growing too fast to be healthy. All things considered, the visit to America was very convenient.

Bertha's dismissal of Whitsey had been followed by the resumption of her full income, and, upon the death of her former husband a year afterwards, she found, to her immense surprise, that she was the recipient of the bulk of his fortune. A suit of his family to render the will null and void brought her back to her native country. The thought of her native land was principally represented now by that of her coming ordeal with the reporters.

She rose and entered her bedroom. Vases of carnations filled it with perfume to oppression. She opened the wide window. Upon the clear freshness of a vast half circle of ocean, the waves tossed under a cold September moon. On the horizon the lights of a steamer showed. She was reminded of another night and the lights of the boat from Sala bringing her lover.

"Jack!" she smiled.

He had fulfilled his destiny, gone back to America and his wife, and she also was fulfilling her destiny in the way his hands had set the rudder of her life. What did it matter? Nothing



mattered. Things were not dreadful, only their names. Away in the other end of the ship a band was playing. The night breeze, salt, crisp, from thousands of miles of water, lifted her hair. Italy? What had she left in Italy? Her power to love? A faint smile showed on her lips. Had she ever possessed such a power? Life was just a mist through which one wandered blindly with arms outstretched, hoping that they would close about a love to lead one up into the sunlight. She smiled once more. Was not that Whitsey's platitude? It sounded like him. There was no such thing as love, only passion. And America, with its waiting reporters, lay two days down under the horizon.

"Madam," said her maid, entering, "a wireless from New York says Alexander is nominated for Governor. It excites the gentlemen."

Bertha turned from the window.

"Miss Brierley," she called to her secretary, who was assorting the neglected papers in the adjoining room, "who is he? You read the news from the States."

"A terrible person," answered a pleasant English voice, "whose ideas have frightened even the President. A gentleman gone Jacobin is Barnard Alexander."

Bertha Roth gazed out of the window at the





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silver moon path that led away to the black  
of the world.

“Barnard Alexander?” she murmured. “V  
association have I with that name?”

## CHAPTER XXI


**B**ERTHA'S return to her native land was unexpectedly ignored by the press. Had she been skilled in the ways of modern journalism, she could have measured the extent of her fall by the ease with which she passed through the outer firing line of reporters. As for her former friends, they were of course at this season scattered to the four winds of the social heavens—for the present there was no fear of embarrassing chance meetings in the quiet apartment that sheltered her incognito.

But the first interview with her lawyers convinced her that her stay in this country would be more protracted than she had anticipated, and as the days went on she rebelled against the quietness. Entirely dependent upon the revolution of the social machine for occupation, and having lost her place in those now merrily spinning at Lenox, Long Island, and along the Hudson, she found herself unoccupied, with no use for the tools she knew so well how to handle.

So through restless ennui she began to venture

now and then to the theatres. Here there were still chances of recognition, but the unemployed days in her apartment held a possibility from which as yet she shrank, though with a cynical wonder as to why she should continue to do so. That stage of her progress had arrived when self-deception links hands with fear in constant battle with reality. Abroad, amid the clamor of the social vortex, the voice of fate was not so clear and insistent as here where her windows looked out on the familiar slopes of the park upon which she had played as a child. The call of home which had first reached her in Italy now pierced through the walls of her cosmopolitanism. The sight of the familiar avenue down which she had often driven to the hospitality of these boarded and forbidding houses, the very crudeness of the hard-cut perspectives in the glaring sunshine, all spoke to her of another life, another path from which her feet had wandered far. She decided to leave town and await the course of legal events on a country estate in the mountains of New York, which had been her husband's, and until it could be made ready for occupancy she plunged without restraint into the awakening theatre life of the town.

It was on leaving the Garden Theatre one evening that she found her carriage suddenly engulfed in the outpouring throng from Madison Square Garden, a throng whose clamor had reached faint-



ly through the intervening walls. There had been a political rally addressed by Alexander, as his name in electric letters proclaimed from the tower. That the oratory had been potent was proved by the excitement of the faces streaming past the brougham window in the recurrent glare of red fire. Cheers and groans enveloped the occupants of the vehicle in a whirlpool of human uproar through which at intervals the brassy blare of bands pierced.


"Oh, isn't it exciting, Mrs. Roth!" cried her companion with all an Englishwoman's enjoyment of political ferment.

"What a tension they are under!" Bertha commented. "It is Paris. One looks for the coming of the *gens d'armes*."

"There are the *gens d'armes*." Her secretary pointed across to the edge of the human carpet at the fountain where the silhouettes of mounted police moved against the scarlet glow of the trees. "How excited these people are! Really, this man should not be allowed to work on them so."

"My dear Miss Brierly, if he did not, some one else would. They would be just as excited tomorrow about his rival. I do wish they would stop that Greek fire; it may frighten the horses."

"But, Mrs. Roth, surely it is a fine thing, a wonderful thing, to be able to sway all these people! Hear them shout his name!"



"It is not fine," Bertha said contemptuously. "It is the cheap triumph of the common agitator."

"But your countryman is evidently not a common agitator. Heavens! this crowding is terrific. See the people crushed up against the wall of that house! And those boys are so pressed up against our hind wheel that if it turns——"

A hoarse growl, rising from near the fountain, interrupted her. The mounted silhouettes began to reel and rear. Evidently something was occurring to irritate the crowd, now rapidly becoming a mob, for the growl increased to a roar.

"What can have happened?" asked Bertha, at the sound of curious men climbing to the roof of her carriage for better vantage ground to observe the tumult. A tremendous groan answered her. The mob swept back, panting, shoving, struggling away from the oncoming crashing of the clubs.

"Oh, shame!" cried Bertha.

She was not afraid. The blind, impotent rage surrounding her poured into her veins, awakening unreasoning, feminine sympathy with the victims of force. The driven faces swirled by like a tide, dashing down side streets, melting before the rush of the brutally clubbing policemen. The square of the brougham window framed the tossing heads of horses and striking uniformed arms before which the last fragments of the crowd ran, crouch-


ing and cursing, among the equipages of the theatre-goers.

Her carriage door was torn open, a youth in the black blouse of a mechanic clambered in and crouched at her feet, gasping, his arms covering his blood-matted hair. Other arms, brass-buttoned, plunged after, dragging him out, unresisting, and trembling from the expected blows. The impulse that brought Bertha from her carriage, that moved her to shelter the creature with the folds of her cloak, was simply that of a high-spirited woman to whom violence is always brutality—an impulse that in another she would have been the first to denounce as theatrical. But for the moment, forgetting herself, she stood pallid, disdainful, wrathful. The embarrassed policeman paused on seeing this sumptuously cloaked guardian angel in the whirl of an election riot.

“Why do you maltreat him? What harm has he done?” she demanded of the sergeant who came up.

“Them fellows began to rush my men, lady. We had to break ’em up. They always get wild after Alexander speaks. We got to be careful. If we let ’em go——”

“I will not discuss the question with you. I saw your men striking this boy as he ran. He was running when he received that blow on the



head. I saw it. Your superiors shall know of this, I warn you."

"A lot of good that'll do," yelled a voice from the arcade. "He's got his orders to break up Alexander's overflow meetings."

"Clear that arcade!" commanded the sergeant, angrily. "Clear 'em out! Push 'em along."

"Better be careful, Dugan," remarked a reporter at his elbow. "Here's Alexander."


The ring of police and reporters parted to admit a number of gentlemen in evening dress. Their leader advanced to Bertha.

"Madam," he bowed, "allow me to thank you for protecting this boy. I happened to see it. It was——"

"You are sure they will not hurt him any more?" Her heart was throbbing so she could scarcely hear. She saw the circle of faces, distorted, scarlet, as through a mist of blood shot with flying crystals.

"I assure you, madam, they will dare do no more. They have gone too far already."

Now he remembered her. Her arms had been full of red tulips against a background of sun-dappled leaves. She held out her hand to him blindly and he put her back into the carriage while the crowd applauded her. The door closed and they rolled away.



Bertha leaned back.

"Ridiculous, wasn't it?" she smiled, tremulously.

"It was an impulse. I always act on impulse."



## CHAPTER XXII

**B**ERTHA glanced at her father's card on her breakfast tray with a surprised curve of the brows. The dissipation of her incognito had been one of the unpleasant results of her participation in the election riot.

She found herself again in the spot-light of the press; but it was with something approaching indifference that she sought to avoid its glare. Gradually a hard surface was forming over her sensibilities, from which the things which formerly pierced them deflected with scarcely more than an annoying scratch.

That her parent should break the silence with which her family had treated her ever since her elopement was, to say the least, justification for the arching of her delicate brows. His manner, when later he returned her greeting, conveyed to her subconsciousness that there was, metaphorically speaking, little of the odor of prodigal baked meats in the suave warmth of his welcome.

"You rise very late, Bertha," he remarked, as

he polished his monocle. "But I presume my visit is early,"

Bertha smiled. She saw that her parent was tactful enough not to pretend to any undue familiarity—with the tact of his class where all emotions are carefully weighed that they may not overbalance the scale of the proprieties. It amused while it relieved her.

"I have intended to call for some time."

Mr. De Frances adjusted his glass and surveyed her.

"You are looking very well, my dear—very well," he went on.

"And you also, father. What exquisite roses!"—burying her face in the flowers he had just given her.

"Yes, they are from the conservatories at Lawrence. The gardener—you remember old Patrick—named them after you, the 'Belle Bertha.' They are the graft of something grafted on something else. I never can remember the names."

"Old Patrick, is he still alive? And he called them after me?"

She rose and began to arrange them in a slender vase, her hands touching them gently.

"And Angelica," she said, turning from them, "is she well?"

"Your stepmother is in a sanitarium at Lakewood, waiting for some symptoms of something to

develop. It's a long time doing it, but her letters are very hopeful, poor soul."

He removed his monocle. If Billy De Frances could ever be said to fidget he did it now.

"What can he want?" thought his daughter.

Really it was very hard to give just the right air to this interview. The constraint she had formerly felt in her father's presence she now discovered to be a childish name for boredom. Mr. De Frances was being diplomatic and when he was diplomatic there was nothing to do but wait. Bertha seated herself.


How artificial he was! Really he would have to give up either stays or apoplexy—they were not compatible. He continued to discourse, slightly nettled by the sweet coldness of her smile. It was as though she sifted his arguments through a fine net and, in some subtle way, he and his class with them.

"So, my daughter," he concluded, "it behooves us to stand together in this crisis that menaces us all in common."

"I do not see how I am in danger."

Billy De Frances placed a hand on his creaking side. It was very hard to spend his riding hour in explaining politics to a woman. Truly his sacrifices for the party were enormous.

"My dear," he said aloud, "you know all our interests are tied up in the different traction



systems that this man intends practically to confiscate."

"Mine, father? I understood my mother's property to be entirely in Canadian and North-western lumber lands."

Billy shifted.

"As trustee under your mother's will," he explained, "I have, from time to time, as I thought judicious, placed such portions of your capital as were available in 'State Traction.' This vast corporation, comprising as it does the consolidated trolley systems of the State, is now fighting for its very existence. The election of this——"

"One moment, father! Politics bore me. I understand you want a contribution of ten thousand dollars from me as an individual?"

"Yes, since the recent agitation, the corporations are hesitating in making direct contributions, so those of us who are interested make it a personal matter. In the event of things resulting as we anticipate, the indirect returns to your estate will render the investment of very remunerative proportions."

"I will tell my secretary to send you a check this afternoon. Oh"—as he began protestations of gratitude—"it is merely a matter of business, and in business I rely on you entirely." She smiled at him with a hint of finality. He managed his departure successfully, without committing him-

self to any recognition of her social claims. Bertha smiled, then sighed as the door closed upon him.

"Poor father! What a puppet he is! Something between a man and a manikin. Far more concerned about preserving his waist-line than his daughter."

From the earliest period of her memory he had been a vague figure, with gaps in her recollections due to protracted absences which he was supposed to fill by making money, but which eventually filled the newspapers with suits of fair actresses. These had never bothered her mother, who condoned them to avoid the trouble of condemnation. All the men and women she had known were puppets, pursuing puppet pleasures through a tinsel world.

Later the green slopes of the park invited her and she decided to walk. The air was crisp and the trees brilliant in their first autumnal livery. A faint smell of burning leaves hung in the breeze. Bertha crossed the park and, coming out on the avenue, decided to walk up to the museum. The boarded fronts of familiar residences, attesting the absence of their owners, reassured her. She wondered what they were doing, these former friends. It was the hour when the tea tables were appearing on terraces, and all the diversified parts of the social machine were gliding together preparatory to the evening revolutions. She walked faster. These thoughts were dangerous, for another

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thought lay treacherously beneath them. But still they would not be denied.

She had become an impossible person whose money alone saved her from being an unspeakable one. And yet how was she different from the divorcées of her former coterie? She was too honest to take refuge in that subterfuge. She had been a coward, and society drove from it cowards. The feeling that some one was watching her disturbed her reverie. She raised her eyes. Whoever it was had passed. It was a mistake to come here—a mistake to tread these familiar pavements—all—everything was a mistake. Suddenly that which she had been resisting sprang upon her, turning her steps toward her apartments.

Crossing the avenue, she entered the park again, hurrying along in the completeness of her surrender. The long swells of brown green were still flecked with late sunlight; but here under the trees twilight had fallen. Over the far thickets night was creeping. She must go abroad—not to England—that was over; but to Paris—gay, cynical, unmindful Paris—the last step.

“Bertha,” said Whitsey, overtaking her, “for God’s sake, let me speak to you! For God’s sake, don’t cut me, until I say one word!”

She started back with repugnant terror against the low parapet spanning the bridle path. But the terror vanished as she looked at him. The

lined face, the haggard eyes scarcely retained a trace of the handsome, assured Jack Whitsey.

"What is it you wish?" she asked, almost gently.

"I want to tell you—I wanted to write you; but I didn't dare," he said, in eager incoherency. "I never thought to speak to you again; but when I saw you just now on the avenue, you looked, somehow, kind. There is no use making excuses; but I never would have deserted you. I meant to tell you that when you drove me away. And she sent me the first money—heard I was hard up from the Carringtons. After that—well, it's no use trying to explain. It's hell to be a coward."


He paused. The impulse that had prompted him to speak to her died away in a realization of the weakness of his words. He was poignantly aware of her beauty. It had flared up, mirage-like, upon the empty desert of his life. But, in the very pity in her eyes, he saw his doom.

"I forgive you," she said. "What is the matter, Jack?"

The man rolled his walking-stick between his palms, gazing into the darkening tangle of the woods.

"I've left her. I couldn't stand her after—after you. I've lost my grip, if ever I had any. Bertha, this world is hell for a coward."

She felt a throb of pity. She had blamed him



for the wreck of her life. Was she guiltless in the wreck of his?

"Jack," she said, looking at him kindly, "I am sorry. We have both been to blame; but it is over. Good-bye."

He watched her lithe figure disappear down the dim path. The night closed around him.

Four hours later Barnard Alexander sent up his card and a note which he trusted would secure him an interview with Mrs. Roth. But he was disappointed. Word was returned that madam was indisposed.

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## CHAPTER XXIII

**I**T was after this that Bertha resolved to hear Alexander speak, but no opportunity immediately presented itself, and in the meantime his visit was not repeated. Then she heard of him through the medium of the press as having gone on a tour of the northern counties. She and her secretary made heroic attempts to unravel the political snarl as knotted in the newspapers, and to her surprise found Whitsey's name among the speakers who opposed Alexander, but this revival of the eloquence of Jack's youth interested her only as a means of finding out what her own, or what had once been her own, world thought of Alexander.

"Apparently, from these editorials," she said, one morning as they sat in her sun-flooded morning room, "the man is a paranoiac, anarchist, a professional politician of the deepest kind, a calculating optimist and an imbecilic dreamer, and yet they call women illogical."

"I thought he had a very fine head," said her companion, looking up from the paper in her hand. "But this paper says that his campaign is a hope-

less appeal—a fruitless attempt to inflame the great, sovereign, respectable, hard-headed American people. And it hopes the President will really break precedent and stump the State against him, as the reports from the manufacturing centres are most alarming.”

“I am quite sure he is not an anarchist. His manners are those of a gentleman.”

“He so impressed me, but the *Tribune* says that his speech at Oneida on the law shakes the very pillars of the republic.”

“He distinctly said that he was attacking the judges, not the law,” cried Bertha, in quick defense.

“It’s all the same in the eyes of the judges. I suppose they are so used to finding errors in other people that they have no time to discover any in themselves. When any one else does, it seems to them an impertinence—like a criticism from a servant.”

“But the judges are supposed to be the servants of the people.”

“Well, they act just as though they were—always angry at the least criticism and anxious for more wages, flaring up if any one dare to suggest that they do their work differently. Ah,” with a reminiscent sigh—“you never see that side of servants, Mrs. Roth.”

“The law is like millinery, Miss Brierley.



While the wealthiest customers may not set the fashion, they get the benefit of it and are waited on first."

"Surely you respect the law, Mrs. Roth?" in shocked English protest.

"I respect the law, yes. I respect my milliner, but that is no reason why I should let her put any horror that she pleases on my head. She wouldn't respect me if I permitted it."

The ladies returned to their papers.

The year had been a hard one. Public confidence, undermined by revelations of vast corruption in places of trust, had collapsed, bearing under its débris the fortunes and positions of thousands of innocent sufferers.

The explanations through which Bertha waded were many and varied, but one thing was sure—the hungry, hopeless swarms were gathering in increasing masses under the leadership of Alexander. Storm clouds, cumulous and hoarse with the anger of hungry and suffering people, threatened the peaceful security of the conservative element.

Political watch-towers were heliographing the coming of the tempest. Financial weather prophets knew that once it burst over the sovereign State it would sweep in a vast wave that might deluge the country in a flood of ruin.

The party of Alexander had virtually been swamped by the personality of its chief, and against

him and the whirling swarms of his radicals the whole force of the administration, the "better element" of his own party and the special interests were consolidating for the battle.

Bertha threw away the paper. It was evident to her that the man was a force. His face, in the red fire, had been that of some Vandal in the flames of a stricken city, a destroyer, yet, for all that, a demi-god—a vital force threatening the world of marionettes, shaking the cardboard pillars of the temple.

"When does Alexander speak again in New York?" she inquired.

"Saturday night at the Academy of Music."

"Send to my lawyers and tell them to arrange for our going." Bertha had never seen a political meeting, and when, on Saturday night, she watched the arrival of the marching clubs, headed by their bands, streaming down the aisles, and saw the banked and shirt-sleeved galleries—a rustle of horse-play, she admitted that here at last was humanity in the raw.

Everything interested her. The lines of smoking, scribbling reporters; the circle of notables in sheepish prominence on the stage, and the vast pack of shouting faces and waving arms greeting the figure of Alexander, touched her sense of the unusual. Always susceptible to impressions, this

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dense mass of humanity waiting upon the words of a single man filled her with an awed realization of his power.

The sardonic fire of his speech was a sword cutting the restraining cords to the floodgates of sound. The intonation of a word, the emphasis of a sentence, loosed the roaring waves which beat against the walls, rolling back and forth in gigantic reverberations of excitement that grew in contrast to the control of the orator.

A dangerous man, but a master of men nevertheless, playing upon these screaming thousands with the sure touch of the leader. What he said she scarcely knew in her absorption in the manner of his saying it. Hazily, she heard his attack upon the great "State Traction," the attack that made political history. But clearly to the end of her life she remembered the power of his eyes and the damp, boyish hair.

The reporters scribbled, tossing memoranda to messengers hurrying back and forth to the offices of their papers. All over the town men at telephones and tickers were absorbed in taking down and sending out the speech. In far cities night editors were tossing batches of it to copy-boys before the cheers that greeted its ending were finished.

But to the woman leaning from her box the



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only thing of all the hysteria of excitement that reached her was that he held the flowers which she threw him in his hands, and that he smiled at her.

## CHAPTER XXIV

**T**HE lamps, softened by the rose silk of their shades, diffused a warm glow over the luxury about him. It was in just such an environment he had always pictured her. The delicate fragrance of the massed carnations and lilacs amid the golden toys of her writing-desk, the opal tones of silk rugs, each smooth reflection of porcelain and rich low note of bronze had its suggestion of the rare fineness of the woman for whom he waited.

It was the third day after the speech at the Academy of Music, and Alexander had called in answer to Bertha's note of congratulation. As he sat watching the fire leap behind the glass of its screen he wondered at the power of the magnet that could so deflect him from his course.

Women were not a factor in the world of politics that was his life. And such as he had seen in his moments of pleasure or relaxation had not been of types to make any impression upon him. With all the harshness of a middle-class moralist he divided women into two kinds—the good, the

women of his youth, those who kept the houses of his friends in a domesticity of limited horizon—and the bad, the glimpses of whose crude effulgence revolted a moral sight accustomed to the monotones of provincial Puritanism.

Strangely enough the stories he heard did not serve to link her with the other questionable women of his acquaintance. She belonged to a different world, the social ethics of which he did not judge except orally and in public. She was a beautiful woman and of a type he had never known; beyond that, he thought of nothing but his desire to see her. Bertha entered, advancing to greet him with outstretched hand, enveloping him in the brightness of her welcoming smile. Instantly he felt the power of her beauty under which he had lived so long in memory. In the rosy light she was again a spirit; but this time one sprung from the luxury about her; a thing of considered loveliness, the rare fine flower of an exotic imagination.

Bertha was too much a woman of the world to fail in giving this interview exactly the proper tone. A semi-humorous, semi-serious treatment of the incident of the riot and a wholly serious treatment of his speech was the method which occurred to her and which she proceeded to put into practice. Barnard probably never realized the real skill with which she put him upon the footing of an old acquaintance without mentioning Italy.

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He realized nothing but the long live curves of her body in the satin sheath of her gown, the firmly modeled purity of her bust and throat against the velvet cushions, and that her eyes were sad and appealing even through the gay sweetness of her smile. Somehow, in some manner, she appealed to dormant chivalric impulses that he little thought were his.

Bertha saw his blind groping in the silken net that, mesh by mesh, she drew about him with a feeling of returning power which was a self-intoxicant. She had seen this man swaying multitudes by the flexure of a word; but she could sway him by the flexing of an eyelash. As the power of his personality had blinded the mob, so the grace of her personality blinded him.

She was filled with an almost pitying sense of mastery; for here, sitting awkwardly among her cushions, he revealed a suggestion of boyishness that was as winsome as unexpected. The lights smoothed the hard lines of the jaw and heightened the appeal of the clear eyes. The sight of the powerful hands holding the slender sticks of her fan in timorously clumsy fingers, the thick, sinewy wrists disappearing into white over-displayed cuffs, and the dishevel of the fine-textured hair aroused an almost protective desire in the woman of the world.

The nearness of his vitality warmed her jaded

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senses, reviving them into a brilliant play that awakened all the man's puzzled appreciation. The mere youth of him was a delight. Bertha's instincts, though rebellious, still obeyed hereditary laws, and so, when Alexander left her, he took with him the conviction that this woman's refinement of femininity gave the lie to the slanders about her. He considered himself very clever as well as lucky that he had prevailed with her to dine with him.

"You are unlike any other public man I have ever known," she said, in the intimacy of farewell. "You have no love for humanity, only compassion for its hunger, its squalor, its failure. It is not the sovereign whom you serve, but the pretender in exile. I think you are very honest, and I also think you can be very true, Mr. Alexander."

Her lovely eyes were a triumph of impersonal tenderness, and, unconsciously, a little pitiful.

"No man knows if he can be true until he is tried, madam," he answered, gravely.

"It is a beautiful thing to be young," she said, softly. "They will call you the Boy Governor."

"They call me much more than that; at least your friends do."

"I have no friends."

Her smile was a bright shield interposed between him and the sadness of her life. Suddenly he bent and kissed her hand with tender, youth-

ful sympathy; then, with a violent blush, he left her, awkwardly closing the door. She stood a moment and looked at her hand; then smiled, shrugged her shoulders, and went over to the mirror.

A step and the tinkle of glasses sounded behind her. She crossed to the liquor service on the table. Raising the decanter from the flower-decked ice, she poured out the brandy. Then she sank among the cushions of the sofa and sat thinking, the untasted spirits in her hand.

## CHAPTER XXV

**T**O Bertha, with an awakened life interest that she supposed had passed her, the ensuing weeks were filled.


A temporary rest had taken place in the campaign—a breathing space in the battle ere it swept on to the final clash. Since the speech at the Academy of Music the administration was said to have declared a truce with the great special interests, and it was announced that the President was coming in person to stump the State in favor of his candidate.

The cessation of the attacks upon what the administration had called the “criminal corporations,” the continuance of the hard times and the picturesque fire with which Alexander had conducted his campaign were attracting to him the voters in increasing numbers. After his interview with Bertha he dined with her and her companion often in the privacy of her apartments, a little sheltered nook from the turbulence of the struggle.

Here, lingering over a cigar, he gradually unfolded his hopes, and the tale of the hard years

of his bitter struggle out of poverty. The son of an unsuccessful lawyer in a small country town, he had abandoned the hopeless attempt to follow his father's provincial practice and came to the great city, where finally his fight against its political corruption had focussed him in the eye of the State and nation.

More and more Bertha realized that here was a man of no compromise. She had called him a boy; but she saw that this was no boy. Through the mills of fate he had been run into the steel of manhood. He was so unusual to her that this very element of novelty laid a restraining hand upon her passion. He was so pure in regard to women. And he was in love with her. It required all the dexterity of her art to keep the avowal in abeyance. She desired to feel his passion about her, enveloping her, but feared to touch it, well knowing that under her touch its high character would change. This was the last link with her youth—this love the only true one she had ever inspired. She toyed with it in languid enjoyment of the situation, feeding the fire that eventually she knew would burst through the crust of convention. The game was fascinating, absorbing, the more so that she now was certain that she too would not escape. The flames that would burst forth would find her in their midst. So she continued to feed them with an epicurean fear.



One day, after returning from a canter in the park, she found her father waiting.

"Gad, Bertha," was his paternal greeting, "you are growing younger and younger. You look more like twenty than—er—how old are you, my dear?"


"It depends on the person and the light. In the evening twenty-five, in the morning two hundred, with any one who knows my birthday, thirty."

"Gad!" exclaimed Billy, whose expletives had no variety in drawing-rooms. "You don't look it: Well, it's a family trait. I made up my mind to look forty twenty years ago. I wish you'd keep on looking twenty. Then you and I could go out together without either of us exciting comment."

Bertha smiled sweetly at him. Her father was a bore. If he could only be induced to cease treating her as if they had just been sent in to dinner together he would be more bearable. He was rouged a trifle under the eyes where the flesh was breaking loose from the cheek bones. She remembered her mother's having said of him that if he had one foot in the grave the other would still skip in juvenile gambols. What was he saying? She caught the name of Alexander.

"So we have all decided to contribute another ten thousand."

"Why is it necessary?" she asked, her eyes on the huge bunch of violets he had brought her.



"Well, you see, he is making a serious attack——"

"I should have said, for what do you wish it?"

"Eh?"

"What do you intend to do with it?"

"Bertha, my dear, don't ask silly questions."

"The question is not silly. You asked me for ten thousand dollars. I naturally desire to know what you will do with my money."

"Good Gad, Bertha!" exclaimed her father. "No one is supposed to know what is done with his contribution. The results are supposed to speak for themselves. This man's election means the ruin of the 'State Traction.' "

"It means the regulation of it—that is all. It is folly to say that to force it from politics and make it deal honestly with the public would ruin it. As it is now it is nothing but a slow-spreading sore on the integrity of the State. Forced from politics, freed of its political leeches, it would be benefited."

She paused. Her father's apoplexy was too threatening.

"You've been reading his speeches," he gasped at length. "Bertha, it's immoral to hold such sentiments."

"Nonsense, father! I appreciate one thing fully at last."

"What?"




"That there is no greater menace to the great fortunes than their owners. This wealth has burst upon us, been showered upon us by the natural growth of a new country. In the case of the State Traction it has been practically a free gift from the people whose franchises we have abused. No, father, we of the great fortunes act like thieves with plunder, paying blackmail to politicians for protection, to the church for its charity."

She paused again. Her anger surprised her as much as her sudden advocacy of a cause to which she had given little real attention. Could she really have come to believe what that man taught? Billy De Frances looked at his daughter with cynical attention.

"I presume it is true what I hear in the clubs," he said, "that this man, Alexander, has a new convert. I've let you go your own gait; but, if you still desire a little fatherly advice, permit me to tell you that my experience of the ladies in politics is, they never interest themselves in a man's platform without having a deeper interest in his person. You might, during the course of your next political dalliance, inquire of Mr. Alexander as to his wife. *Prenez garde, ma chère fille! Au revoir!*"

The curtains closed on the dapper bow and smiling face of her father. Bertha walked to the window. Why should she care? She had but





played with him—sought to make of him another marionette to dance for her pleasure. And he had been playing with her also. The thought stabbed through her vanity; but she knew by the deeper ache that it pierced a more vital thing—her trust in him and the pure quality of his love for her. The wound was in her soul and she knew by its agony that she loved him. He had treated her as the light woman that she was. She drummed her fingers on the glass, looking out over the park, and clear before her mind appeared the reason for the restraining hand upon her passion. Unknown, unguessed, it had been the hope that he might save her.

She left the window. There was the sofa upon which he had sat the first night. She could see his face in the rosy light, strong, tender and, yes—yes, honest. But after all he was like the rest of the men she had known. She fell on her knees and buried her face in the cushions against which he had rested and remained motionless, save for the rise and fall of her bosom, and so she said good-bye to the hope that revealed itself in its death pang.

A noise in the outer room brought her to her feet. She was writing when her secretary entered.

"Miss Brierley," she said, "I wish you to start this afternoon and see if 'Mistmoor' is ready for me. I will follow in a week."

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"Yes, Mrs. Roth, and do you recall that Mr. Alexander dines with you this evening?"

"I have written to change the engagement to late supper. He is so busy with the election I am sure he would prefer it. See that the table is laid in my boudoir."

## CHAPTER XXVI

**I**N pleasant circles of light from the lamps and the glow of a warm hearth, the little room greeted him with the intimacy of a caress.

He hesitated, thinking that some mistake of the servant's had admitted him to this sweet privacy. But the small flower-decked supper table in glittering proximity to the fire reassured him. He looked in puzzled, affectionate surprise at his surroundings.

How typical of her fine rarity of nature that all which ministered to it should be of the same quality!

The walls of azure satin were made superb by a single, great, flowering cherry tree of wonderful Japanese embroidery which almost covered one wall with its snowy pink and white suggestion of eastern spring. Gorgeous butterflies dipped among the blossoms, and, circling across the ceiling, all a drift of fleecy, summer clouds, they hovered about the sole ornament of the farther wall—Shannon's portrait of Bertha.

The slender, white-draped figure against its

background of sunny leaves spoke to Barnard with memories of Italy and the day she had entered his life. How delicate the face was and how sad the eyes! The great artist, piercing through all the surface glitter, had spread on the canvas the budding promise of a soul.


He bent and examined the metal plate on the frame:

*"Portraite d'une Mademoiselle."  
Salon de 1898.*

Ten years! And so she looked as a girl!

A rustle of silk curtains made him turn and, in the lamplight, flashing from the spangles of her costume, he beheld her like some gorgeous exotic flower turned human for the night. The white line of her naked arm holding the curtains, the fall of her slender neck, the moving expanse of her bust, and her eyes, like shaded violet pools, filled the room with a suggestion of unspoken things, unwhispered delights from which he strove to close his mind with terror at their unlooked-for attack.

Joyfully, fearlessly he had come as to a shrine to worship; but the goddess had stepped from the altar warm with the blood of the flesh. And his heart began to beat with a fear of her beauty before which unguessed traditions of his blood sprang to arms. She smiled. His trepidation came from



such clear, open spaces of youth. The game was ending; but she wanted to play it a little longer; it was so new.

"You are looking at the date of my portrait," she said, as they seated themselves at the table. "I keep it here and look at it in the mornings. One should always have unpleasant thoughts in the mornings. They go with the light. I never have any agreeable sensations until I know that my complexion is lighted properly. That is why I am always moral in the morning."

"Are you ever serious? Your portrait tells me that you were. Are you now?"

"No, dear boy," she answered, laughing, her tapering fingers busy among the fire-mirroring multiplicities of a liquor stand, "I was then very serious. It must have been because I had to wear white frocks. I think a great many women go wrong through dressing with too much purity. It makes them believe that virtue is unbecoming to the complexion."

Her laugh was like the challenge of a thrown flower. He leaned his folded arms on the table, looking at her gravely.

"To listen to you one would think you had not an illusion left," he said.

"Oh," she shrugged, "I have illusions, but no delusions."

"What do you mean by that?" he asked.

"I mean that with the proper lights I can create the illusion of twenty-two; but I haven't the slightest delusion that I am under thirty. Nothing is so unbecoming as for a woman to forget her age, or to look it. When a woman looks her age you may know she is either happily married or unhappily in love. When she forgets it, you may be sure it is because too many people remember it."

She laughed, her cheeks pink night roses in the candle's glow. It was pleasant to puzzle him; to lead him into mazes of badinage and vanish; then to reappear only to flutter, butterfly-like, from the net in which he sought to catch her flitting thoughts.

"Why should I be serious?" she said, in answer to his final protests. "Nature was not so when she made me. Probably she had just finished a lot of serious people such as you, my Atlas of Politics, and she was too tired to put anything but the lightest trifles into my making. I am glad she did. I can blow with every wind which pleases me. To-night, I feel like a sail over fairy land. If I hold out my hand will you come with me and forget all things but that we are alive?"

"Can we ever forget that?"

"Oh, it is so easily forgotten! There are times when I wonder whether I am not the fragment of some one else's dream—some one who dreams badly. That is why I love that"—pointing to a

silver statuette that rose from the violets and gardenias in the centre of the table. "Is she not instinct with the joy of life? Do you wonder that flowers spring up under her feet?"

"Flora, is it not?"

"Yes, it came from Herculaneum, from the tomb of Suilius Torqua. But she has forgotten all that. See how she smiles and dances! There is something so satisfactory about her. No one worships her any more. When she went into that grave her temples were scattered all over the world, and now she has not an altar. But she doesn't care. She spent two thousand dark years in that tomb; but she is still laughing. She knew there were always flowers and sunshine waiting for her."

"How did you happen to get it?"

"I will not tell you."

A curious smile faintly touched her lips.

"I have her," she went on, "I love her. She is life. She has forgotten; so have I. Oh, there is something so beautiful in the old Pagan gods. They were the gods of sunlight, of trees and skies. How much nearer the truth they were than we are!"

"Were they?"

"Yes, they loved life. It was all they were sure of, so they lived it."

She looked at his direct grey eyes with their



black pupils. The suggestion of the well-muscled shoulders through the creases of his coat, the powerful hands and sinewy wrists and the vitality of his young body poured into her veins and lit flames in her eyes. Dropping her lids over their sudden glow she asked:


"Have you never felt the call of life, my friend?" Life! The blossomy surface of her bosom was beating with it. It called to him from the pink flush of her cheeks, from her eyes, deep, full of soft purple fire. He felt its mighty impulses drawing him toward something unknown, tremendous, from which he shrank. The satin walls, the fire-lit familiarity of the little room, suddenly became a pit around which his inherited instincts ran in frantic attempt to escape. Life was going to his brain like wine. It beat in the pulses of his forehead and trembling hands.

"Life." He caught at the word as at a rope in the rushing tide that bore him to her. "They left us something of that, did they not?"

She put her hand upon his fingers.

"You in your youth are life," she whispered. "Believe me, I have lived, and in all the world there is nothing worth while but youth."

She seized his hand and pressed it to her lips. He dashed the table from between them. It fell crashing, the silver Flora rolling battered upon the hearth.





He did not hear; he only knew he held her, their lips crushed together, and the world was a rosy vapor through which her eyes looked up like misty stars. And her warm arms around his neck were a chain of roses binding him to her and to his fate.

"My love," he murmured, "my dear love!"

She swayed to him in delicate surrender.

The fragrance of her hair and flesh rose to his brain. Delight so exquisite as to be almost pain, shook him as he kissed her brow, her eyelids and her hair.

"Bertha, my wife!" he said.


She drew back from him.

"Don't use that word to me. I hate it."

"Bertha," he cried, passionately, pitifully, "I mean it—I want to marry you."

The mists were rising now, revealing the stern virtues that heredity had bred in his blood. All the restraint of his ancestors, all their love of honor and respect for the rights of the unborn children, sprang to grapple with wild forces that she had called up in whirlwinds of fire. And, in the glare of that fire, he saw those old virtues, unyielding, uncompromising, holding high the Tablets of the Law.

And so the dead of his blood and the dead of hers battled for the soul of the woman that hung in his arms. Swift memories of the stories he had



heard of her coursed through his brain, and, in the new clarity of his senses, he saw her as she was, as men had made her. And he kissed her gently.


"Bertha," he said, "my wife!"

She looked up at him, searching his face in eager questioning that died in the answer of his honest eyes.

"They lied to me. You meant to marry me."

She began to tremble, hiding her working face on his breast. He smoothed her hair, all the mercy of the strong in his light touch. She was to him something bruised, gentle, driven into his arms by the hunt of fate. And all grossness drifted away before the strength of his understanding pity, leaving clear to their sight what really had been the foundation of their love—the pure passion of their souls for each other.

And so they stood amid the broken glass and spilled wine of the supper.



## CHAPTER XXVII

**M**R. Barnard Alexander,  
"Hoffman House.  
"Personal and Private.

"BARNARD—I have been thinking ever since you left me. All night I have sat thinking. And now that you are gone, dear, I can see what I must do. Love, I cannot marry you. Last night in your arms, with all your strength about me, I felt that you were strong enough for both, for fate; but to-day, in this cold light of morning, I know that I have no right to that love. You may think you know me; you may think you forgive me; but, dear, I know how it will end. I will not drag you down. Let me go, Barnard. Be strong for me, dear, and leave me. Do not come back to me.

"BERTHA."

"Mrs. Bertha Roth,  
"The De Lamballe Apartments.  
"By Hand.  
"I will come at five o'clock.

"BARNARD."

He dispatched this note and turned his attention to business. But all through the day ran the memory of her, not as she had looked at first, beautiful, glittering in the power of her loveliness; but as he had last seen her, when she raised her wet, sad eyes to his face to see if he yet loved her after she had shown him her soul naked in the depths to which it had fallen.

He felt for her almost an anguish of pity. He could read her story so well. She was as the men she knew had made her; what they desired she had become. And he hated her class for the wrong it had done her. At last he found himself waiting for her in the drawing-room where first he visited her. She entered the room, pale, her eyes wistful. He held out his arms and without a word she was in them.


"Bertha," he said, "my little love!"

There was an appeal in her that went straight to his manliness, she was so feminine, so frail. He smiled reassurance to the troubled loveliness of her eyes.

"My love!" she whispered. "My love!"

And her soul seemed to enter into his as into a refuge, a sanctuary. She could not deny herself this sweet security, this moment of perfect, trustful rest, temporary though it might be.

At last with a sigh she drew away. Smoothing the disarray of her hair she carried her trail-



ing grace to the fire. The light cast upward from the logs threw faint violet shadows upon her pallor. Alexander was poignantly aware of her sweetness. She looked like the girl of the portrait.

"You should not have come," she said. "I have no right to this. It is too late."

"It is not too late, Bertha. Look at yourself in the mirror and tell me if with your youth anything is too late."

"Barnard, I am a woman—a woman of the world. Do you know what that means?"

"To me it means nothing."

"Do you know what they say of me?"

"What do I care what they say? I care only for you. When a man loves as I do, it is because God has willed that he shall. He has met the woman whom God has made with him. They are bone of the same bone, flesh of the same flesh. She is part of him, always has been and always will be. What do I care what men have been to you? It is what you are to me that makes me love you. You are mine!"

He caught her and pressed her head against his shoulder, stroking it.

"Love, the past is a closed book. Let us seal it with a kiss. Kiss me!" he commanded. Her lips sought his with the motion of a flower.

"Barnard," she said, "you will conquer always."

Take care of me. Don't tire of me. Please don't tire of me."

He crushed her to him in passionate reassurance and all the frozen springtime of her heart melted and burst into blossom. Three hours later they sat side by side in the fire-glow. Night had come, looking coldly through the windows. Yet here in the warm darkness were happiness and peace.

"Dear," she said, "I have always been blind; yet always I have desired to see. Do you know what I think of love such as ours? It is Christ's touch upon blind eyes. I have always in my heart known that men were not the distorted things they seemed; that somewhere there was a way to clearly see them. I thought that it was in me to find it; but now I know that it was higher than that. You came to me, you showed me. Oh, I can see! I can see!"

She raised his hand to her lips.

"Dear heart," he said, "I also have been blind. I was blind to pity once and now it is too late. May God forgive me!"

She drew closer to him. Even the thought that he had been pitiless was an added pleasure. Wrapt in the warmth of his love she looked upon the cold waste of his past in which others had suffered.

"It is too late," he continued. "But, dear, there

shall be nothing in my life that you do not know. I, too, have made a mistake."

"What do I care, Barnard?"

"You must know; then we will never mention it again. They told you of my dead wife. They did not tell you about her."


"What is she to us, dear?"

"I must tell you. Bertha, she died in a hospital—a drunkard. Ah, don't shudder and draw away, dear! You cannot understand—you, so dainty, so fastidious, so delicate in all that is about you—you can feel only the horror. Yes, and that is all I felt. Oh, God, what I have seen!"

He sprang up and began to pace the floor with clenched hands.

"I was very young, religiously trained," he went on. "She was a woman older than I, and I loved her as only a boy can love a woman like that. She concealed her habits so well that no one knew of it. Well, I married her and I discovered what she was on our wedding night. I might have been kinder and saved her; but I think it was too late even then. Besides, I was young and pitiless. I hated the dirt into which she dragged me, and I left her to die in it. May God forgive me, but I still loathe her memory."

The bitter waters of his old disgrace were all about him. But gradually they receded and he



seated himself beside Bertha, drawing her into his arms. Suddenly he cried:

"Bertha, you are crying!" And kneeling, he clasped her hands, looking up at her averted face. "Don't, love!" he pleaded. "You hurt me. That is all dead; all gone; all the wretchedness, all the misery of it. We will never speak of it again."

She tried to unclothe his arms, but could not. She tried to speak; but, looking into his clear, loving eyes, gave a cry, turned from him and fell face down on the cushions, sobbing and gasping.

And he raised the hem of her dress and kissed it.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

**I**N the hour of our common danger, I ask you to unite against the imminent peril, against this violent, unreasoning, ferocious radical."

The cheers that greeted the ending of the speech continued with unabated volume as the President's private train drew out of the station.

From his vantage point in the second saloon car, Jack Whitsey could catch the flash of a silk hat as it waved in answer to the applause. The crowd slid by the window, giving place to glimpses of gayly decorated streets. Then, bathed in the sunny light of late October, the neat farming country unrolled. He turned to the bustle of the Presidential suite between stations and speeches.

"How are these for good ones?" cried the photographer, rushing in from his dark room with a bunch of damp prints in his acid-stained hands. "I got him fine that time."

His ejaculations rose from the centre of a curious group.

"Look at that one where he is banging his fist," he chuckled. "And this one with both arms spread

and yelling. Photos made, developed and printed in fifteen minutes. Here, Mason"—to one of the minor secretaries—"these are all right to give out at the next stop. They'll print fine in the papers. That one where he is shaking his fist with his mouth open will catch the Rubes."

"I am afraid not."

The minor secretary—an unobtrusive, but by no means an unimportant, young man—looked doubtfully at the prints.

"The next speech is Northboro, and that's too conservative. He'll wear a silk hat and frock coat. We'll have to give them a more quiet set. Print up a few of those you got in Rochester of his receiving the Baptist delegation for the *Herald*. And one of him shaking hands with the engineer for the *Record*. It's got a big labor following. We'll keep these for Bingport. They're more in its line." The shirt-sleeved photographer disappeared on the rush.

"Mr. Whitsey," continued the minor secretary, "I'm going to leave you at Roverhampton. Our manager has telegraphed for one of the best speakers to address to-night's mass meeting there. It is a fine opportunity. You'll get all the crowd that will gather to hear the President in the afternoon."

"Thank you!" answered Whitsey.


His sudden success as a campaign orator had

come to him as a complete surprise, and that he should be selected for such an important meeting as Roverhampton gratified him with the thought that he was attracting august attention.

"We will pick up the local manager at the next stop and he will go over the situation with you," continued the young man, as a telegram was handed to him.

"Bob," he cried, after he had glanced at it, "there is a mistake here. This telegram says that there is a strong military sentiment in Northboro. Hurry through and tell them that the speech is to be in gaiters and riding breeches. Hustle! And you, Grice, get some of those horse-hurdling and uniform photos ready. Mr. Whitsey," he continued, "we must make all exertion at Roverhampton. It's a blue-light religious district ordinarily; but Alexander spoke there and they've gone to hell since."

He left Whitsey and sped toward the seats of the mighty. Whitsey turned to the flying landscape. It was good to feel this new sense of a place among men. Despise himself as he would as weak, debauched, useless, there had been in his nature the vital spark of manhood. The return to his wife had been the last yielding to expediency. From this time on he would strive to hold to the chance his eloquence—the last remnant of his battered youth—gave him.



The country was beginning to dot with the first buildings of their next stopping place. It was fine to feel again the stir of popular applause—applause of the tea-cups now gone stale forever. And this was only the beginning of effort. He had been a coward. The realization of his loss in Bertha had come to him, cloaked in the distance of the past that obliterated all traces of old annoyances. Her beauty called to him with memories of old delights. And hope that sprang from new-found energy whispered also.

Northboro, a sprawl of loose streets filled with farm wagons, dissipated his reverie. Again the familiar scenes unrolled—the crowds, the bands, the banners, the noise that heralded the arrival of the great one. By opening the window and looking out, Whitsey could descry on the last platform a sturdy fist holding a wide-brimmed felt hat, waving in response to joyful shouts. A few roaring moments and they slid away amid the saluting smoke of the local militia company, indirect cause of the Presidential costume.

Why should he not hope? He had not seen her since that day in the park; but he knew her to be still in town, living quietly. Every day added a story to the tower of hope that he was rearing toward her.

“Who’s got a pair of kneed pants?” asked the young secretary. “Quick! There is not a pair

on the train and he's got to look democratic for Millchester. Haven't one of you gentlemen got an old pair? His are all creased."

Jack's attention followed the anxious youth through the car until the door slammed behind him. After all, he thought, the business was a fine one. Even the little shifts of stage costume gave interest to the play. They harmed no one and were an interesting game in the drama of the moment. The crowned heads of Europe always wore complimentary uniforms when visiting, so if——

"Oh, here you are!" exclaimed the secretary, returning with a pair of worn trousers over his arm, and followed by a red-faced man. "Mr. Whitsey, Mr. Benton, our manager at Roverhampton." And he bustled away, the legs of the porter's trousers waving good-bye.

"Draw up a chair and we'll get to business," said the local manager. "Hey, Sam, bring a quart, iced, and give me them cigars. On second thought, let's go back to the library, where we can be alone and get this straight." And Mr. Benton waddled down to the little section devoted to private conferences of the lesser satellites of the august entourage.

"Now," he said, after he had locked the door, "you and me can get down to it. Here's what I got from Quirtz, the President's private secretary. You see, you'll begin"—and the next half hour was

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devoted to the speech as planned by the mighty one.

"Now," he concluded, "that's all they want. But I've got a little tip from our headquarters in New York that will do us a world of good. It's between ourselves, mind. The big fellows don't want to know about it, and he"—with a jerk of his head toward the seats of the mighty—"wouldn't stand for it for a minute. But we've got to break this damned hold that Alexander's got on the religious crowd somehow, and I think we'll fix him now. His character was our weak point." He began to fumble among some typewritten memoranda.

"Well," said Whitsey, drawing out his cigarette-case, "it is a game. If the man has been a hypocrite——"

"Our New York reports say he is mixed up with a shady woman—spends all his off time in her apartments. Now, you see, just a hint of this in your speech——"

"I must know more," returned Whitsey, drawing back the window curtains.

From the scudding hilltops the long tree shadows told of the coming night.

"Oh, she's shady, all right. We've looked up her record. Here it is."

He held out a typewritten page and continued:

"You needn't mention names, you know. People

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will get wise when the papers come out to-morrow.  
We've put them on."

"What is her name?" asked Whitsey, indifferently.

"Bertha Roth."

## CHAPTER XXIX

**T**HE pale morning broke remorselessly, bringing with it the day that must be. Bertha needed no daytime to clarify the grim problem. Yesterday, gilded with the light of security and safety, was gone. Barnard's revelation had dispelled the fairy vistas and revealed them for what they were—the cold stretches of the past.

She had not found the courage to tell him the one thing he did not know—the legacy from her life with Whitsey. And now this love that she had found by the wayside of her life must go, and with it all the hopes that had sprung up at its bidding. Barnard had not been willing to take what she had offered. He simply could not love her as he did without the desire to place her beside him upon the firm rock from which he looked over the sea of life. He, of all her lovers, had believed in the purity of her soul and aroused in her a passionate desire to purify it.

She could not tell him—she could not. The thought was physical agony. Yet how was she to




escape? If she left town he would follow her, wrecking his chances of election and his future. But to see him again would be to lie to him. Face to face she could not tell him.

The sun rose, sending the city about its business. Later the house woke to activity. Her maid entered with her breakfast and the morning papers. She continued to lie in bed, staring at the canopy. What pretext could she find to go out of his life as he had always thought her—a woman beautiful, rare, of exquisite finish?

With the desire to know where he would speak that day, she opened the paper. Her attention was arrested by Whitsey's name, and she read of his speech at Roverhampton.

"It was remarkable," said the conservative sheet in her hand, "in that it was refreshingly free from the usual personal vituperation of the campaign."

So Jack had triumphed—won up from the slime. She hated him. He was with her every hour in her struggle with the thing that he had planted in her life. A sudden clearness of memory seized her, and the horror of her life unrolled itself, picture by picture, incident by incident. And it seemed as if Barnard were present at each one, watching her with his grey eyes. Thus for hours, among the unread newspapers that held the story of her past, Bertha Roth paid for that past.



When at last she rang for her maid, it was with the conviction that, come what might, for the rest of her life she could suffer nothing more from fate.

Her maid brought the information that a number of representatives of the press had been waiting some time to see her. Presuming that Alexander had announced their engagement, she refused to see them. The office warned her that they continued to wait; so she did not leave her apartments, but paced the rugs until the patterns wove themselves into her thoughts. And thus Barnard found her when he broke in upon her, his face distorted with anger. Seeing the dull pain in her eyes, he caught her to him.

"The cowards!" he cried, kissing her again and again, while the tears were in his eyes.

She saw them with instant alarm.

"What is it, dear?" she plead. "What have they done to you? Tell me!"

"Have you seen the papers this morning?"

"No, love. What is it? Is the election in danger, Barnard?"

"Damn the election! and them! You'll have to know. Bertha, they are attacking you. The beasts!"

His voice broke in a sob.

She put aside his arms and with gentle dignity crossed to the table and opened the unread papers.

He watched her with eyes that quailed. At last she dropped the sheet. It lay on the floor between them, a reproduction of her portrait staring up from the page.

"This," she said, quietly, "is the truth."

"Listen to me!" he cried. "You shall not speak. I know it all—all. I knew it that night of the supper. But you did not go down of yourself. They dragged you. I'll tear this past from you. I'll not leave you a shred of it. I came to tell you that we'll be married at once. Get ready! I'll show them."

His face flushed with angry blood, he was the fierce animal who had battled his way to the head of the howling pack. This fury for her frightened her, and she retreated from him; but only for a moment. The pride of caste rose at the threat of force.

"I am not your wife yet, and I never shall be."

Her cold impassivity, so foreign to the women he had known, made him pause.

"Listen," she said. "You have toiled all your life for this election, and yesterday it was yours. To-day they couple our names and defeat faces you. How could I marry you, knowing it would wreck your life? True, I am rich; but you are no man to live on a woman's money. Don't interrupt me. Let me finish. Loving me as you do,



yet is your work first, as it should be—as you would find it would be after the years had passed.”

“Bertha, that is a lie. I love you. I want you more than anything else in the world.”

“And when you have me, what have you then? You say you will tear this past from me. You can’t, because it is not mine. I share it. How will you tear it from the men who share it with me? You speak of our future. Will you share our future with my lovers? For the future of women like me is only the past by another name.”

“That is another lie. I’ll fill your mind, I’ll fill your heart with my love so that there will be no room for anything but me.”

“You can’t do it. I am the rented house. Every chamber of my heart has had its tenant. What can I give you that another has not known? What new thing can you take from what the others have left? Can I be the mother of your children? I offered you what I had to give. You would not take it. You ask of me something that I have not to give.

“You talk of a new life. I tell you, Barnard, there is no new life for women such as I am. We have lived our lives. As we begin, we finish. I am right. Dear, let me go.”

“I will not.”

“You will have to. It is the law, Barnard, it is the law of life. Nature sets apart women such

as I am that the race may go upward—the may be saved from returning to the brutes.

"You are making excuses that you do not believe. You are no victim of laws. You are tired of men. I want you. You said last that love such as ours opens the eyes of the world. Well, I see you the woman you are—the woman God meant you to be. You can't love me, Bertha. You love me. Look at me! Look into my eyes. I am the stronger. You can't fight against me. Kiss me!"

Slowly, against her will, against every reason, she looked at him and kissed him. Afterward it came to him that that glance had been to him, enfolded him as though to imprint his feature upon her memory. He had conquered the sheer power that his love for her gave him. The beauty of their passion enveloped them in a perfect moment of their lives. The music of the band came to them faintly. He unclasped his arms from about her.

"At eight," he said, "I shall be here with the clergyman. Be ready."

And he left her.

The sounds of bands came to her with increasing volume. Alexander's great parade was beginning its march toward the reviewing stand which he had departed. The music drove away the last cloud of her reverie. She felt the

under her feet again. And there lay the newspaper with its accusing headlines.

"If that were all," she said aloud, and sat thinking at the table, while the music sank and swelled as it passed on to honor the man she loved. And all over the State they were using her name to work his ruin.

A card was brought to her and, to her surprise, she saw the name of Alexander's campaign manager—a man he had often spoken of. That Jimmy Preston was in cold possession of his faculties was evidenced by the manner in which he seated himself on the extreme edge of a chair and regarded Bertha over the top of his silk hat.

"No, ma'am," he explained, "I have no message from Mr. Alexander. My carriage was just passing in the parade and I stopped to see you."

His eyes traveled to the newspapers on the table and he paused.

"What is it you wish to say to me?" asked Bertha.

Jimmy's shiny brown eyes returned to her.

"Well, I want to say, lady, that I have come here to call that little trick you and State Traction have been working on the lad."

"Trick! What do you mean?"

"Oh, the *Journal* has just 'phoned me that they've got your canceled check for ten thousand dollars made payable to the other side's campaign

fund. We know, too, you're a big stockholder of State Traction; but it don't work, that little trick, lady. It don't work. This marriage was a bully thing for State Traction; but we'll see how it goes when we get the facsimile of your check in all to-morrow's papers."

"The facsimile will show you," said Bertha, quietly, "that the check is dated prior to the time I met Mr. Alexander. Also he knows of it and refused double the amount for his fund."

The impudent courage drained out of the man's face.

"The lad's beaten," he said, and rose, putting his hat on in helpless oblivion to her presence.

"Sit down, Mr. Preston," said Bertha, kindly. "I have needed some one to talk to, some one who is a friend of Mr. Alexander."

Jimmy seated himself.

"Tell me the real effect of this"—with a gesture toward the newspapers.

The man removed his hat and began to brush it nervously.

"It is this way," he answered in a low voice, drawing courage from her eyes. "Yesterday, he was elected. To-day, the religious people are all worked up and the other crowd thinks he's gone back on them by marrying into the very crowd he's been denouncing—right into State Traction,

in fact. Yesterday, he was just as good as Governor and that means President later on."

"Oh, is it really as bad as that?" cried Bertha.

"Yes, ma'am. Politics is a funny business. A man ain't his own master. I know the boy is straight and you know he is straight and that he'll stick by the people that elect him; but how are we to make them damn fools out there see that? Another man would have kept this marriage quiet until after to-morrow; but the lad's given it out to the press himself. I don't blame you, and, looking at you, I don't blame him. But we that have followed him and believed in him—well, we've lost our chance."

"Can nothing be done?" she asked.

"Nothing. He won't stand for any lie."

He looked at her with piercing eyes, judging her.

"Lady," he said, "I've known him for fifteen years. I put him into politics. Do you mean well by the lad?"

"I mean well by him," she answered, holding out her hand, "and I am glad to meet such a friend to him as you are."

When he had gone she stood at the window, watching the parade marching around the Plaza and down Fifth Avenue. Gradually the slopes of the park began to dim with the mists of night; but the banners and the bands continued to pass.



Night fell. The park sparkled with necklaces of arc lights. The glare of torches was reflected on the houses opposite. At last she left the window and entered her bedroom, where she unlocked a silver medicine case that stood upon the table.

She paused a moment with the lid raised in her hand; then with a cry seized a bottle and smashed it upon the hearth. She passed her hands over her terrified eyes and let them fall hopelessly. A sickly, heavy odor filled the room and she opened the window. The cold night air entered with the music and the swell of a marching doggerel from thousands of voices:

"You're brave all through;  
A man like you  
Will do just what he says he'll do,  
That's why we pin our hopes on you—Alexander."

Bertha shut the window and, hurrying to her desk, began to write.

"I will not wreck your life. I had hoped not to tell you; but I must try to save you. I am a drunkard. I am going back to Paris. Do not follow me. Do not think that your love for me has been in vain. Such love as ours is never in vain. It has made me strong enough to hold you forever in my heart, alone—strong enough to say good-bye."

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Her pen trailed away. The uselessness of sending such a letter to a man like Alexander arrested her. He would come; he would take his chance. The clock struck six. Possibly at this moment he was coming.

Her head sank on her outstretched arms. He would force her to marry him. By the power of his love for her he could conquer her hope for him. And this was his second wedding with a drunkard. The first woman, poor wretch, had revealed herself on her wedding night. When would she reveal herself?

She raised her head; then sprang to her feet and rang the bell.

"Bring me brandy here at once!" she said to her maid.



## CHAPTER XXX

**S**TILL they flowed, a river of faces, streaming by amid a sustained howl of cheers. Night fell; but the flood continued, black-shadowed by the arc lights or red from the torches. Looking up, they saw him, slender, young, the sum of their hopes. Looking down, he saw them not at all; but only the sum of his hopes—a woman, the remembered light of her eyes blotting all these visible eyes from his mind.

His anger at the world was gone. Now that he could retort to it by marrying her, he forgot all save that it had thrown her the sooner into his arms. He wanted to be with her—to interpose the shield of his name between her and the stones of the mob. At last the faces were gone and he was free to go back to her.

“Gentlemen,” he said, turning to the reporters, “will you designate two of your number to be present at my answer to your morning articles? In other words, I wish them as witnesses to my wedding. I am to be married immediately.”


As they motored uptown the hotels presented

vistas of thronged tables and hurrying waiters. Under the electric signs of the theatres the first knots of pleasure-seekers were clustering. Here and there billboards proclaimed his name, or news-stands displayed her picture. Once a man recognized him and cheered. Again, as his car paused because of a block in the traffic, he caught her name from the lips of a woman in rouge and a Merry Widow hat.

Entering the park they scudded down the Mall and a glimpse of moonlit water spoke to him of the unfolding romance he was entering. Then they were crossing the lighted avenue and were at the bronze doors of their destination.

The satellites of the portal recognized him and also the profession of the cleric who descended with the reporters, and it was amid a flutter of excitement that the party crossed the hall to the elevator. Her maid informed him that they were expected. Barnard stood waiting. The whispering of the group behind him died away and the peace of the little room descended upon him gently, the first waft of content from the nearing shores of love.

Everything here was precious to him. Each had its dear memory. Among those cushions she had rested—that mirror had framed her—and on the table lay her fan, so suggestive of her in its fragile ivory and painted lace. He heard the approach-



ing rustle of her draperies beyond the curtains and turned. Her laugh struck him with the dazing violence of a blow.

The curtains were torn open and he saw her. Laughing, swaying, with flaming cheeks and hair a tangle of disheveled curls, she staggered to the table and leaned across it toward him. Through the floating tendrils of her hair her eyes scorched him with insane brilliancy and defiance. And she laughed.

Insolent, abandoned, beautiful as a Bacchante from the whirlpools of the lost, with the merriment of the damned, she laughed. She was laughing when they tore his hands from her throat. She laughed while he fought with them that he might kill her—long after they dragged him away, she laughed and laughed.

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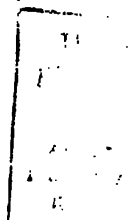
The next night on the deck of *La Burgundie* a group who were spending the night before sailing aboard gathered at the rail, looking over at the dark city.

Suddenly, from an unseen tower, a long sword of light cut upward, pointing north against the cold sky.

"Alexander is elected," said a voice; "he broke with that woman just in time."



“The curtains were torn aside and he saw her.”



## CHAPTER XXXI

**T**HE first year of his incumbency of the Governorship taught Barnard the difference between the political promise and its performance. He suffered from the well-known tendency of the American people to elect a man in a fury of wrath at the wrongs he is to correct, and to become immediately indifferent both to him and to the wrongs themselves.

In Alexander's case the public waited patiently for at least three weeks for the abolition of powerful interests protected by special laws, then remarking to the effect that their former idol was a "fakir," and had undoubtedly sold them out, the public went about its business. A heavy corn crop had stimulated trade, and this in turn opened the closed factories, into which the ragged, menacing hordes which had followed Alexander disappeared as if by magic; and reappeared as comfortable workmen, who ate, drank and went to the vaudeville, to grin when the "patter partners" referred to the Governor as "Buggy Barney." For as soon as the



American workingman gets a "job" and a clean collar, his "menacing aspect" vanishes.

Alexander was left in the position of a political accident—an idol shoved aside. A fallen idol may excite pity, but an idol on the shelf and out of fashion is less than nothing; and an idol out of fashion was Barnard Alexander.

Had His Excellency possessed a keener sense of humor the position would have been easier, but he was a dreamer and also a hater. The intensity of his hate for a certain class surprised even himself, and as time went on that class came to be typified in the people behind "State Traction."

That great corporation, after undergoing a severe fright, found itself stronger than ever. It was able to pass a law through the Legislature bestowing upon itself a blanket franchise, and the Governor's veto was received with peals of laughter. On 'Change the stock reached the highest point in its history on the confident prediction that the bill would be immediately passed over the Governor's veto. The banking house of Roth issued a statement of the consolidation and refunding of all the securities of the system into one holding company.

A small group of the Governor's adherents in the Legislature were able momentarily to retard the repassage of the bill by certain parliamentary obstructions, and the Governor in despair issued

an open letter to the public. Then occurred one of those peculiar transformations of American politics which astound the cynical and confound the hopeless.

To the vast surprise of Alexander and the politicians the answer to his letter came from a force that had never joined him in the hour of his radicalism. A powerful, mysterious and silent body, drawn mainly from what for want of a better term is called the "lower middle class"—small farmers and tradesmen—now gathered about the Governor in the hour of his almost total eclipse; and backed by them and their wonderful power of direct pressure upon their individual representatives, Alexander fought the bill.

"State Traction" was annoyed. Wall Street was amused but confident. The Governor's ante-rooms were filled with quietly dressed, middle-aged men, who, after seeing the Governor, went in groups of two or three to the hotels of the legislators and, calling these gentlemen by their first names, talked to them at length. After these visits the urbane representative of "State Traction" found that the lawmakers were what might be termed *distract*.

Later came the holiday recess. During the adjournment several things occurred favorable to the Governor. Two Senators, who refused to go home, received deputations from home, and then declared

that they would stoutly oppose the efforts of a vile corporation to debauch a people; also "State Traction" refused transfers over a large section of its lines. The public, denied transfers, experienced a great moral uplift. Finally, when the Governor faced the reassembled houses he was in a position to dictate.

In the course of a few weeks it was seen that the franchise bill must be modified. But Alexander had now got what the politician terms his "second wind," so necessary for the reformer in the great race with things as they are. Accordingly he refused to treat and introduced a bill to restore to their original parts the various consolidated trolley systems of the State.

The campaign hinged on the re-election of certain Senators known to be hostile to the Governor, and to prevent this Alexander bent all his efforts. It is absolutely surprising—this power of the man who has convinced the people of his honesty. The Americans as a whole seem to accept the alleged veniality and self-interest of their representatives as a matter of course, divining as only the collective brain can divine the huge obstacles in the way of absolute, direct honesty in the affairs of a client who is too indifferent to his affairs to care if he actually receives it. But once convinced of a man's honesty and freedom from hypocrisy, the manner in which the people trust and follow that man is

almost pathetic if traced to its final cause. Alexander's campaign was a success, and in the next Legislature his bill for the dissolution of "State Traction" became a law.

But the will of the people must be first submitted to the judges, who discover whether or not it is right for the people to have what they want, and in the case of "State Traction" the judges discovered that the people had made demands not to be permitted by the calm, wise gentlemen who held such intimate social relations with the class attacked. In the decision there was a ringing paragraph referring to the "innocent widows and orphans" who owned the securities in "State Traction."

Wall Street received the decision with applause, and the press had many fine editorials on the widows and orphans; but "State Traction" declined. Despite every effort of the banking house of Roth, the stock tumbled. "State Traction" was sick.

"What is wrong?" asked the Street. Here was a favorable decision. Years must pass before the final adjudication of the law as to "State Traction," yet the stock behaved as if it were already dissolved. But the house of Roth was behind—the stock would rise again—let the widow and orphan have no fear; the dangerous fanatic of a Governor should not hurt them. Were not the directors of

the corporation, the guardians of their money, the greatest men in the Street? The fatherless and the widow consulted "Poor's Manual," and were comforted by the august names of the directors who guarded their property from the fanatic radical.

But "State Traction" continued "sick," and other stocks caught the malady. Day after day they sank, with only feeble rallies.

"What is wrong?" asked the bewildered and frightened.

"Have no fear," said the Street. "Read the honored names of the gentlemen who guard your property."

One day the widows and orphans had the pleasure of reading the names of their directors attached to a series of interviews in which each explained that he had no interest in the company whatever—in fact, that he only attended the directors' meetings from pure philanthropy; that was upon the day that "State Traction" went into the hands of a receiver.

The cause was simple enough. The gentlemen of high finance had bonded the company for fifteen times its value, with the bland, childlike optimism our financiers display in the matter of other people's property. They blamed the Governor; they claimed that if he had kept out of the matter their optimism would have made good; also, they were sorry for the widows and orphans.

The widows and orphans went to law. The calm, gowned gentlemen were kindly, and put their case on the docket, where, in the course of years, it could be tried; but in the course of years the statute of limitations made a trial unnecessary.

Not all the directors escaped, however. It was whispered about the Street that the house of Roth was in the ruin. The old man, at least, had played fair. However, the house did not go down, and rumor said that it had been helped through; but it was never the same power again—the same power that had supported any questionable operations that the Street fathered.

Old Roth retired, and there was a report that his fortune was impaired.

"He should be grateful to his ex-daughter-in-law for abandoning her suit for his son's estate," said society.

Alexander, the first promise of his campaign fulfilled, returned to the more orderly and less spectacular pursuit of his general policy. Unconsciously his general attitude changed with the change in his constituency. He came in time to stand for certain moderate and sober achievement and to be regarded as a safe man and honest.

He was re-elected—but by another element than that which had first followed and worshiped him. In fact, it was a surprise to his intimates to remember the enthusiasm he had once provoked.

"He is a good man, but cold and commonplace," they said of him.

One spring morning during the second year of his second term as Governor, His Excellency looked up from the *Paris Herald* and gazed out of the windows with eyes which took no note of the sun-filled streets of Albany.

Beside him the baskets filled with official documents stood neglected. At his elbow lay the type-written list of the day's engagements. In the ante-rooms his visitors waited, but His Excellency was not thinking of business—he was wondering why Mrs. Roth's name had disappeared from the pages of the sheet which formerly had chronicled her movements with so much care, and why he no longer hated her.

For a long time after that horrible scene in her apartments he had hated her, and in his mind he rehearsed an imaginary meeting wherein he grasped the remembered beauty of her throat and killed her; but even as he pictured himself as her murderer, he remembered the soft smoothness of her flesh, and hungered for her. He saw plainly now little details which his physical eyes had scarcely noted before. A certain wave of hair against a white, blue-veined temple tormented him for days. The manner in which her eyebrows arched when she smiled grew clearer and clearer, until he saw every hair of them.

As the defeat beneath his political triumph developed, and he found himself ridiculed and deserted, his mind reverted to the happy time of his life when, in the homelike setting of her little apartment, she had given him of her sweetness and sympathy. Scarcely a hope was finally abandoned without the memory of her face when he had shared it with her. He was convinced that she had never loved him, only played a while and rid herself cruelly and finally of a persistent lover when the time came. Yet the harsher his life grew the more he recalled the tender beauty of their happy days, and the dimmer grew the memory of her cruelty. He began to find excuses for her in the realization of his dullness and stupidity in leaving all the little graces, which were to her as a part of life. Once the sight of a profile which in purity and refinement of type suggested hers, blurred his eyes with quick tears, for he had loved her, and she was very far away, and—he was a failure.

Then the success of his battle with "State Traction" gave to his ambition the impetus it needed, and, with the gradual settling into habits of heavy work and responsibility, she began to fade from his life. The yearning for her sank deeper and deeper into his heart, until he thought it was gone. He came to believe he had forgotten her.

One day a copy of the Paris edition of a paper came into his hands and he read an account of one



of her dinners at the Hôtel Ritz. Just an inch of space and her name in type; but after that the Paris *Herald* one week old always lay on His Excellency's desk and was opened before his morning's mail.

Each day after he had seen her name he told himself that he would never look for it again, yet the next day he was restless until the paper was in his hands. Gradually the familiar letters, repeated from day to day, recalled memories and yet other memories, until it seemed to him that he could see her at her gay dinners in Paris or on the Esplanade at Monte Carlo, where he read of her as having taken a villa. Then the mention of her became infrequent, and at last he searched for it in vain.

Was she ill, he wondered, or had she gone to England? Well, he would stop the paper, since it made no more record of her movements. She was as beautiful as ever, of course, and going laughing through life with no more memory of him than would serve to point her wit. He turned to a morning paper which his secretary had marked.

This particular sheet had once been his most violent supporter, but it now desired the removal of the District-Attorney of the City of New York for reasons known to its advertising department, which had once been able to run some profitable if questionable personals. This paper now attacked Alexander because after three days' notice and two

editorial warnings he had not removed the official on the evidence given in the editorials. The article was long and contained many statements about the Governor which, if too much pressed, the paper could correct in microscopic type. Yet Alexander, being a serious person, read to the end and grew angry. Then he forgot all else in seeing Bertha Roth's name in the advertisement of a forthcoming auction of her furniture.

With a feeling of absolute stupefaction he read the long statement in which the creditors of Mrs. Roth informed the public that they had imported and were offering for sale at a well-known and fashionable auction-rooms the furniture of this famous beauty, by the direction of the receiver in charge of her bankruptcy.

## CHAPTER XXXII

**T**HE progress of the auction was justifying the costly experiment of the importation of Mrs. Roth's furniture.

Side by side on camp-stools sat all the throng which gathers at smart auctions: the producer of dramatized scenery, a little Jew in the round collar of a Christian cleric; a collector and ex-diplomat, another man of collars, a soiled one on his neck, another protruding from his pocket; the playwright in the 1830 stock, who lisped his bids and waved his big, white-gloved hands for the benefit of the reporters. The illustrator, whose contract with the wealthy young editor beside him was written large on all ash-barrels, urban and suburban, advised with the social leader, whose several veils concealed a face that artists had done in paint and drypoint until it was familiar even to the social climber on her right, credited in the press as her bosom friend. Artists from the "Lotus," business men from the "Players," wine-flushed boys from the clubs of the younger set, heavy, white-mustached old men from the clubs of the inner circle, women of society, girls

of the cafés—all rustled and fluttered, discussing the woman whose name was common property and whose goods were becoming so. Under the electric droplights of the platform the grey-bearded auctioneer sped the dissolution of the flotsam of her ruin.

It was the last day of the sale. To-morrow all that had represented her once almost boundless wealth would be scattered, but to-night it still filled the long chain of rooms where for five days it had been exhibited. The last hours of the sale promised to be of the greatest interest because of the auctioneer's decision to reserve until the last the portraits of the much painted beauty. When Alexander arrived they were selling her fans. Feeling that he could not any longer endure the sight of the dainty things her hands had once held being passed about and commented upon, Alexander went into one of the outer rooms, crowded with the property already disposed of.

Under the harsh light, torn from its accustomed setting, the furniture seemed to lose all sense of her and of the intimate personal touch she was able to give to her luxury until it became a part of herself. Tables, chairs, cabinets, tapestry, bronze and marble had become simply dusty merchandise; yet about them there clung a sense of the mournful. They were so palpably homeless—these things so

obviously designed for the peace and seclusion of rich interiors and the pleasing of fastidious eyes.

He could find nothing familiar, nothing which associated itself with her. He could not think of these mirrors as having held her semblance, or the chair-arms as having enclosed her. Never had she seemed so far away, so lost from his life.

A pile of dusty, crumpled silk twisted about the back of a chair, the gilt of which had suffered much chipping, attracted his attention. With one of the mechanical movements of the muscles that recur when the brain is otherwise engrossed he picked it up and shook it open. It was a dress. A thing once fine and rich enough, but now a cheap stray, tossed by the rough hands of its discoverer from some wardrobe in which it had been forgotten.

Alexander's own hands shook. Nothing brought the fact and measure of her ruin to him like the sight of the tawdry and worthless thing that had once been so fresh and fair for her pleasure.

Through the doorway came the sound of the bidding as they sold the last fan. How cruel it all was, he thought. They had taken even her gowns—her pretty gowns—and reduced them to shabby rags. A sick fear for her came to him. How could this ruin have come about? Where was she now? He thrust the gown into a cabinet that it should not be held up for laughter by profane hands.

Where was she now? he wondered again. Did

she miss her pretty things? What could have happened?

"They are going to sell the portraits now, sir," said his bidder, approaching him, "and the Shannon is No. 4066."

Alexander returned with the man and seated himself upon a camp-stool in the extreme rear of the room. He began to attract attention, which the memory of the former connection of his name with Mrs. Roth's made more significant. However, the sudden hoisting of a canvas upon the auctioneer's table relieved him.


The portrait was a life-size by Boldini, and the electric lights glared from its smashing glitter of technique in a way to make the woman, lounging across a scarlet divan, her trained black satin gown twisted and wrapped tightly about her daringly revealed figure, seem alive. The artist's power had risen to the splendid challenge of her beauty and so transcribed it that it seemed to live, to confront in gay, mocking loveliness all the crowd of measuring eyes. The general, involuntary "Ah!" was probably the greatest triumph of all Bertha Roth's many conquests.

Upon Alexander her beauty sprang with the quickness and shock of a trap. The picture he had come to secure, despite its pure and dreamy charm, could never have affected him as did this brilliant rendering of a brilliant woman. Over the heads

of the crowd he saw the gay smile of her whom he had loved, as though she sat there in the flesh and bade him defiance in the very depth of her ruin. The woman he loved smiled at him . . . the woman he thought he had forgotten, the woman who had flouted him and sent him away; and he knew that he never had forgotten her . . . that he never could forget her, that be she what she might he loved her and would always love her. A dreamer must pay for his dreams sometimes for all his life.

His Excellency purchased the Boldini. The Shannon went to Mr. Blut, of Pittsburg, who later presented it to a provincial museum with his name so large on the gift plate that simple folk think he painted it.

The auction was over and the crush of vehicles about the door suggested rather the termination of some social function than the end of the luxury of a life. The tangle of broughams and motors was so intricate and attended by so much confusing vociferation that Alexander abandoned the attempt to reach his cab, which he saw to be hopelessly caught in the ebb-tide, and began to walk uptown to his hotel. The hour was that deserted one when all New York is domestically sheltered in theater or café, and Madison Avenue, its perspective marked by round white arc-lights, each as sharply defined as if cut out of the cold dark with a knife,



showed empty. When he reached Thirty-first Street Alexander realized that he was being followed. But the avenue while bare of pedestrians was filled with the carriages from the auction hurrying uptown in order that society might change its garments and "go on" to finish the calendar of the night; also, the sight of the lighted doors of his hotel relieved the slight anxiety natural in a public man of so many enemies. He was about to mount the steps when a hand on his arm arrested him.

"Well, Alexander," said a voice with the carefully trained inflection affected by a certain type of man.

The Governor turned to find a shabby fellow, whose face showed the unmistakable traces of a dissipation no longer fought with the care necessary to keep its visible signs at bay.

"Well?" said the Governor. He was puzzled; the man resembled some person he had known.

"You do not know me?" There was an edge of amusement in the voice, almost as if the fellow found some sardonic jest in the change which made recognition impossible. "It is of no importance. I simply had a desire to know how you enjoyed the auction."

Suddenly Alexander recognized him. Jack Whitsey had been the only one of Bertha's lovers he had known, and his hatred of all the rest focused



upon him. His violent rush of anger was patent to the other, who stepped back and held up a hand.

"It's a little too late for us to fight now," said Whitsey calmly. "I suppose viewing the result of your work has considerably damaged your temper. It once had the same effect on mine."

The Governor controlled himself, helped by the fact that they were now watched by the hall servants, visible through the fretted bronze and glass of the doors. His eyes traveled over Whitsey; with fierce joy they noted the stained, misshapen and ragged clothes. Alexander's hereditary instincts were of the type that could see no justice in retribution unless it entailed rags.

"Take yourself off—you are drunk," he said.

The man before him shrugged and turned up his frayed collar. He had an air of light mastery of the situation, a social trick easy enough for the old Jack Whitsey, but strange to see in this derelict of the streets.

"I suppose you know you ruined her," he said pleasantly.

Alexander's astonishment was so great that the word "What?" left his lips before he realized he had spoken.

"Your wrecking of 'State Traction' smashed her fortune. It was in it—every penny. They used her money to buck the market and support the stock, and it's gone—every cent. If you had kept

your hands off she would not be as she is now, penniless and in Paris . . . Paris; and she never could take care of herself."

"But her father is rich?" cried Barnard, every other thought forgotten in the desire to prove the man a liar.

"Her father!" Jack laughed. "He has been in a sanitarium since the smash; he was hit, also. Precious little will Bertha get from her step-mother, except advice, and it's hard to live on that. 'He who gives to the poor lends to the Lord'; but I am sorry to say the Lord's credit is not what it ought to be. Good-night."

He turned and disappeared into the night. Alexander stood thinking for a while, then entered the hotel.

## THE LAST CHAPTER

**T**HE place had an air of disarray. A few fine articles of furniture contrasted cruelly with the rest of the equipment of a room in a second-class hotel. In one corner a number of framed photographs lay in a tumbled heap, as if tossed there by listless hands unpacking some vanished trunk. The wide, black expanse of the piano-top held a dwarf Japanese tree, dead for want of watering, and it was strewn with unopened envelopes bearing the names of tradesmen. A photograph in the simple red morocco frame in which royalty sends its likeness to friends lay on the floor behind the instrument, surrounded by bits of the glass shield smashed in falling.

A small table littered with half-burned cigarettes and marked with circles from liquor-glasses stood beside a lounge, upon which lay several open yellow-backed novels. Trails of cigarette ashes lined the floor. Dust lay thick over all. On the broken, discolored marble mantel was an unwashed brandy-glass. The jalousies showed vivid, little, yellow

bars of the late afternoon sunshine of Paris in May.

A thickset, slovenly woman entered, carrying a tray. On creaking shoes, she crossed to the bedroom door and struck it.

"The breakfast of madam," she called.

"I do not desire it," replied Bertha's voice.

With the indifferent shrug of the insufficiently tipped servant, the woman departed.

Presently the inner door opened and Bertha entered.

In the dusk, her hair damp from the bath, framing her face in soft waves and wet tendrils, she was still a beautiful woman, but stretched on the couch in the stronger light near the window, the deception faded. Distinction and delicacy of features she would always have, but the soft contours and dainty tints were gone. Lying there in the sluggish light against the greys and faded pinks of the enormous couch, the woman in her pallor and languor, shadowy among her plastic draperies, still suggested a butterfly, but a butterfly whose wings had been handled.


The scarlet of her lips and the warm, coppery-brown masses of her hair made a curious contrast to the wan, hueless face, which showed plainly that Bertha Roth, who in her day of beauty had attracted many great artists, had at last drawn the attention of one more. Time, the most delicate

draftsman of them all, was making, with pitiless, exquisite touches, a portrait of Bertha Roth that was also a portrait of a failure.

Upon her return to Paris, Bertha had striven to drown the remembrance of Barnard in a renewed tumult of life. The days she could fill readily, but when the nights came she must lie alone and live through the black crawl of hours that were full of the sound of his voice—of the touch of his lips. Little, forgotten glimpses of him came to her. Old memories took new meanings. His clutch at her throat on that last night when he had sprung upon her came to be curiously dearest of them all. It proved his passion when her fainter memories seemed to belie it. Then the wheel of the hours turning another dawning grey day would warn her that all things pass in a world of day and night, even the passion that would kill the thing it loved.

She came to see the futility of her life—its waste—the ghastly emptiness of it all. She could have grappled better with the anguish of his memory if she had but parted with him as lovers part—with the recollection of some sweet farewell between them.

Had she been differently constituted she would have taken other lovers, but the purely physical had never been dominant in her desires. Her *liaisons* had been rather concessions than surrenders.




She had never been able to do more than reflect the fire of her lovers' passions until the coming of Alexander. The love which came at his bidding had been the bursting forth of all the sweetness and normality of her girlhood, and all the maternity which was mocked and denied by her miserable marriage. When she broke with him, the pall of indifference toward men which had marked the first years of her wedded life was felt again. At last she grew to hate all men because they were not like him, and at times to hate him because he had not been like them. She took refuge in the one thing left to her—the habit which was the cause of their parting.

She began to live in a curious, morbid, dream-world, in which she and he, free, normal and happy, moved on in the life which she had denied herself. In her darkened room, with the liquor-glass beside her, she passed in imagination from phase to phase of a quiet life in a home with him. Finally the life into which she had projected herself became so real that the actual facts of her daily existence obtruded themselves only in some infrequent pang of suffering, as when she was awakened from some pale dream of his kisses to realize that she would never again know the real touch of his lips upon her own. From the abyss into which it had fallen her live soul would cry to his with all the agony of its long dying.

The years were passing; each like a ghost paused to lay its cold hand on some hot impulse of passion, or quiet some quivering pain. Each bore the merciful message of the years: "Be still, thou unquiet heart." And they departed one by one, leaving her calmer, older, more cold.

She had only one care, and that was for her beauty. It was simple for a woman of her wealth to preserve it—a matter of routine, merely, to be looked after by those she paid. Sometimes she would ask herself cynically why she cared to be beautiful still.

Then came the loss of her fortune. Amid the first crash and tumult, Bertha was too dazed to realize that the loss of her wealth meant also the loss of all the elaborate and costly safeguards that surrounded her beauty. Later her mirror told her that she had sacrificed her beauty, too, with her property; that her loveliness was like her jewels—among the things no longer befitting her place in the world. She proved other pitiful commonplaces, also: the salt of small debt in the wide wound of ruin—the daily, hourly realization to one who has never counted the cost how every minute of life must be paid for in actual money. She learned the necessity of the cheap lie to prolong the patience of the insistent creditor. All the coil of debt gathered about her strand by strand. The press and clamor of a world demanding money followed her. She



grew used to the common sights of poverty—the untended rooms, the wearing of garments beyond their fashion and freshness. She discovered that fires did not mend themselves, that the price of friends can be ascertained and reduced to actual money.

She lived shabbily in shabby places. She grew accustomed to the fact that the world is a creditor. Pawnshops knew her. She learned the loneliness of the moneyless, and the slow, persistent ache of the recollection of old days, softer ways, other times and friends. Ghostly laughter from the vanished shores of pleasure rang in her ears, old lights from logs long turned to ashes mocked the cold darkness in which she moved.

Had she been a woman of a different type she could have procured money by the easiest method in the world. But in place of her absent moral sense, her fastidiousness and delicacy of mind restrained her. Also, she was incapable of effort, and any change in her condition would require one.

Slowly regret and longing for the past became deadened. When some new loss occurred, or some new privation or insult offered, she would think of it with a curious wonder and a sense of the pain that would have stabbed the Bertha of other days. Her time was principally spent on the sofa, smoking, drifting with closed eyes down the slow current of the days.



To-day the sunlight was gone from the jalousies before she roused. Some small necessary errand forced her to go out. Listlessly she put on a grey walking-dress of cheap cut and shabby material, over which she threw a cloak, cheaper and shabbier, and, without a glance at the mirror, masked herself in veils and slipped out into the Paris streets.

Her errand done, the thought of a return to her unkempt rooms was suddenly repugnant to her. She discovered that she was on the Rue de Rivoli, opposite to one of the entrances to the Tuileries Gardens. A sudden longing for rest amid the green freshness before her attacked her, and she entered a wide alley, but walking soon tired her and she sat down.

Two hours afterward she was still sitting there, huddled in her shapeless cloak, a dowdy little figure in the darkness. It was a night filled with the softness of springtime. The long beauties of the ordered avenues sweeping up to the arch were all aglitter with the lights of pleasure. The air was sweet with the perfume of lilacs. The renewed world, of which its Maker never seems to despair, spoke of youth and hope, of fresh, growing things.

She would go home . . . she had not realized how late it was. . . . Not that it mattered what she did . . . there was no

convention she need mind now. She rose and began to walk away.

It was the hour when she had once been accustomed to dress for dinner. Her worn boots, peeping from her dress as she moved, caught her eye. She had once been proud of her feet . . . but then she had once been proud of many things. . . . Was it possible that she had ever been anything but what she was to-night? . . . Were the pleasant things of life a dream? . . . its brutality the only reality?

Warm, tender airs from the river lifted her hair. She had reached the Point de Saint Pierre. Below her the clearness of the white and red lights marking the river's banks, the succession of lighted bridges, and the suggestion of height from the towers of Notre Dame helped to recall her own land.

Why was she so constantly reminded of America, she wondered. . . . Home . . . yes, if home means peace and happiness, then America, with its few brief hours of his love, had been the only home she had ever had. . . . But even that thought could not hurt her now . . . nothing could hurt her, not even the memory of the one springtime her heart had ever really known.


A well-appointed carriage, with handsomely cloaked women visible through the windows, flitted by up the Quay d'Orsay.

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At this hour her horses were waiting at the doors of new owners . . . other women were putting on her jewels . . . the servants she had employed were putting the last touches to tables, the owners of which had once welcomed her to a place at them.

The statue of the great sardonic on the Quay Voltaire looked down upon her as she hurried by. The bronze face with the smiling mouth and peering eyes caught the electric light until it seemed as if the cruel, courtly jester at life shook with concealed merriment at something able to move to mirth the great mocker at traditions and their power.

What a jest life was . . . a tale of boredom droned into tired ears . . . a sick display before eyes too cowardly to close themselves. It was terrible enough to be a woman . . . but to be a coward also—that was more awful, still. Her hands shook. . . . Why should such thoughts as that spring on one? Why was she given these panic moments of clear vision? . . . What would be the end? The spring night became full of unnamed things that slunk catlike after her, stalking her through the darkness. . . . What made the smell of Africa in her nostrils? . . . And that screaming—what was it? . . . Only the girls of the Café de Paris welcoming the night and its trade. . . . But this



was the real Paris, not long-banished Mogador, and here was the Hôtel Voltaire and shelter. . . . She would walk no more by night.

Through the narrow halls she slunk up to her room, which she found to be in darkness. She did not care to see her unlovely surroundings, yet the recent shock to her nerves which she had just suffered in the street made her fear the darkness. She was shaken by an obscure terror that made her feel that even here in her own rooms something watched her. She tore off her veils, found the matches and lit the unshaded lamp, and then turning she saw Barnard Alexander, still in his traveling clothes, standing by the mantel.

With the whimper of the suddenly wounded she shrank against the wall, while the light from the shadeless lamp made clear all the shabby cheapness of her clothes, the pallid ruin of her beauty, and reflected the haggard misery of her eyes. From the unwashed liquor-glass to the worn, rusty gloves on her pitifully useless, trembling hands, everything was miserably clear. Barnard Alexander had seen her in all the splendor of her famous beauty; now, bit by bit, the pitiless light showed him the full measure of her ruin.

Gradually the pain of it reached her, and she realized that it had pleased fate that not one little weapon of preparation should be given

her. The man she loved saw her for the first time as she really was, and she knew that his eyes were clear and read her whole story. And she rose to the moment, to the brave facing of the fact that he did know, with the show of gentle courage she could always summon for a crisis. Her smile grew in tremulous bravery, until it even kindled her mournful eyes.

"Barnard," she said, and held out her hand as to some passing friend who had paused for a minute to salute her. Her manner ignored the past as it ignored the miserable surroundings in which he found her. The ease of the woman of the drawing-room was, after all, natural to her. It was with the more self-possession of the two that she continued:

"They made you wait in the dark? . . . I am so sorry." She was now in full possession of herself, and her hand was on the barrier of her breeding, closing it on her emotion.

"I . . . I came at once when I heard," he said hoarsely. "I could not find you at once. . . . Your bankers did not . . . refused me your address. . . . I came at once when I knew."

His old inability to express his emotions clogged his tongue. Over his shoulder she saw her face in the mirror. With an instinctive movement her hands went to her hair, pulling out its soft waves about her temples.

The little, feminine action helped the man. He could not speak, for the whole pathos of the moment clutched like a hand on his throat. His hours in her room before her return had told him her story, finished the tale she had begun the night of their parting. Now, face to face, all the dazzle of loveliness which had filled his eyes was gone. He saw her as she was . . . a woman under the heel of poverty, shabby, lonely . . . stained by the dust of time; and the sight proved, as no dream of her in her radiant beauty could have, that she was all he ever cared for in the world. The thought of all she had ceased to be was lost in the passionate, pitiful yearning for her as she was.

"Bertha, love," he said, "you were not fair to me that last night . . . you gave me no time for choice. I know it is late, but this is my answer now." His arms reached out for her.

She shrank back against the wall. Her control of self was slipping away before the old command of his will.

"I have not changed . . . I am a drunkard," she said.

His answer was to take her gently in his arms. But still she struggled weakly. Pressing her hands on his breast, she held him away, averting her face.

"I cannot . . . it would be your ruin . . . dear, please," she whispered.

He felt that she trembled. A sense of his power

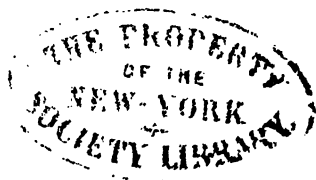
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over her came to him, and with it an anguish of pity. He took her face between his hands and forced her to look into his eyes.

"The only way you can ruin me is to tell me you do not love me," he said.

For a moment their eyes battled, then hers grew wet, while his eyes shone with the clean joy of his soul. Then the sobs came, and she hid them against his coat. The thin hands in the worn gloves clutched him. And in his arms the broken butterfly took shelter from the wind that drove her to her fate.

THE END



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